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GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

TWENTY-FOUR S E R M O N S

BY
THOMAS BRADBURY,

Minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell.

"Then I told them of the hand of my God, which was good upon me; as also the King's words that He had spoken unto me."—Nehemiah ii. 18.

VOLUME IV.



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PREFACE.

“ Christian, dost Thou want a teacher,
Helper, counsellor, or guide?
Wouldst thou find a proper preacher?
Ask thy God, and He'll provide.
Build on no man's parts or merit,
But behold the Gospel plan;
Jesus sends His Holy Spirit,
And the Spirit sends the man.”

THIS is wholesome advice flowing from the God-wrought experience of the now glorified Joseph Hart. To all who know and feel a famine of hearing the words of the LORD, and who long for the faithful ministry of the Gospel from human lips, I would say the same. It is the blessed privilege of the Spirit-taught family to know that none of the children of God can die of starvation. “In the days of famine they shall be satisfied” (Psa. xxxvii. 19). For four long years it has pleased God to send forth from the press the sermons preached in Grove chapel and other places by the most unworthy of all His children. To all parts of the world they have been carried, testifying to the truth of JEHOVAH'S covenant love to elect vessels of mercy, to the glory of Emmanuel, and to the honour of the Holy Ghost. By them, words of life have been conveyed to languishing souls, and messages of sovereign mercy have been communicated to miserable sinners. Aged pilgrims have been comforted and succoured through their feeble enunciations, and youthful travellers in Zion's ways have been grateful for the cautions and counsels found therein. Yet, in the face of all this the Lord has said to me, *I have no further need of them.* To His voice I willingly

and cheerfully give ear, and to His will I obediently bow, while my spirit sings,—

“It is the Lord enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all Divine,
He has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine.”

If, in the consideration of this subject, I turn to man, a feeling of disappointment and sorrow steals over me. I have had many advisers, but few helpers, and in the contemplation of these things it is very blessed to think of the few and say, “Behold, God is mine Helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul” (Psa. liv. 4).

The preaching and issuing of these sermons have been the means of assuring me of my exemption from one woe, that recorded in Luke vi. 26, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!” “The disciple is not above his Master: but every one *shall be perfected as his Master*” (Luke vi. 40). In the spiritual knowledge of this my spirit sometimes sings,—

“Master! I would no longer be
Loved by the world that hated Thee,
But patient in Thy footsteps go,
Thy sorrow, as Thy joy, to know.

I would, and oh! bestow the power,
With meekness meet the darkest hour,
The shame despise, however tried,
For Thou wast scorned and crucified.”

If my Master learned obedience by the things that He suffered, I cannot expect anything better.

In the preface to the first volume I said, and now I say again: “In these discourses I have nothing to offer, and no invitations to make. It is mine to preach Christ as I know and feel Him to be precious to my own soul, and to the souls of His eternally-loved and dearly-bought people, begging of the Holy Ghost to do His own work, so well expressed in this precious hymn by Joseph Irons,”—

“Come, oh, come, Thou Holy Spirit,
Set Thy seal upon Thy Word,
Testify of Jesus' merit,
Life, and joy, and peace afford.

PREFACE.

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Let Thy truth, which has been spoken,
Be to many hearts applied,
And of love bestow some token,
Then shall God be glorified."

To, and for all my spiritual readers I would say, "I pray for you, that our God would count you worthy of His calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 11—12).

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell.

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GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

FAITH IN THE FURNACE.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON TUESDAY EVENING,
NOVEMBER 4TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."—Job xxiii. 10.

IT is by the mercy of our God that we are enabled to read this book of Job in the light of those precious words of the apostle, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James v. 10, 11). There are some who have been left to go to such lengths as to express their preference of *practical* James to *doctrinal* Paul. Such know not what they say. No writer of Divine inspiration is more doctrinal or deeply experimental than James. He leads our minds to deep, dark, and dreary experiences unknown to the superficial and theoretical religionist. Were it not for his statement concerning the patience of Job, we might well wonder, from the history of Job given in the book bearing his name, whether he had any patience at all. Certainly, while he had to do with God alone he was patient and humble, but the moment mortals appeared upon the scene his patience and humility were severely tried. Look at God's estimation and description of him in the first chapter. He was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil. He remembered his children in his approaches unto the Lord, bringing each to his God in supplication and desire, saying, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Job knew full well that his children were no better in themselves than others. He was painfully conscious of the fact that every failing, sin, and folly he saw in them was derived

from himself, and that, left to themselves, and to the working of their carnal mind, which was enmity against God, they could do nothing but curse God. Though this was his character before God, yet temptation, tribulation, and trouble awaited him. During his afflictions, while he had to do personally with God, he was patient, and even when buffeted by the devil this precious grace forsook him not. Satan declared it would forsake him, but God proved and brought to light that inspired truth: "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John viii. 44). When Job's three free-will friends appeared on the scene, his impatience and discontent began. I wonder not at this, for their fleshly free-will insinuations, reflections, cautions, and counsels were enough to drive a free-gracer frantic. Look at that bit of pretty advice in chapter xxii. 21: "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." I think I can see the dear old patriarch look at Eliphaz in such a manner as to suggest to him the propriety of going home and doing that business himself. He was acquainted with his God as the Performer of all things for him, while Eliphaz knew Him not in such heights of privilege as these. Job knew by Divine teaching that acquaintance with God was wholly God's work, and not his own. The false representations which were made to him caused words not in keeping with *evangelical piety* to flow from his lips. Listen to one or two of them. "But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom" (chap. xiii. 4, 5). "Miserable comforters are ye all" (chap. xvi. 2). And what can exceed the withering invective conveyed in words of the 1st verse of chap. xxx.—"But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." Through darkness, desolation, and distress Job was brought to an experimental acquaintance with his God, and to know that salvation and succour from God could only be obtained through His sovereign, free, uninfluenced favour. He was no legalist or merit-monger, but acknowledged that all his religion was from God, with God, and in God. Without God he could do nothing, and produce nothing acceptable or satisfactory to the heavenly and spiritual nature he possessed. This we can see in the plaintive and pungent language of this chapter. Look at the 2nd verse: "Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning." This is not the language of the hypocrite, for his groaning is always heavier than his stroke. The groaning of the true-born child of God is rarely heard by mortal ears, and never escapes the notice of Him who teaches His own not to parade their precious pearls before the multitude. David

knew something of this according to his confession in Psa. xxxii. 3: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Did you notice that? Silent, yet roaring. This is a roaring unknown to the nearest and dearest upon earth, yet well known to Him who alone can create it. Paul, with all those who experience the precious privileges set forth in that blessed eighth of Romans, was no stranger to this experience. Read ver. 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." These are the genuine productions of the indwelling Spirit of God, expressing the pain experienced through the absence of the heart's delight. This is discovered in the plaintive language of the 3rd verse: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" Here you see the sum total of Job's religion. It was the enjoyment of that precious and blessed HIM, that all-prevailing Umpire (chap. ix. 33), that living and loving Redeemer (chap. xix. 25), who had revealed and endeared Himself to him in many a trying hour. He longed to appear before His seat—His mercy-seat—where grace, love, and pity abound to those who are ready to perish. He continues, "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." Grace, flowing in streams of redeeming blood and justifying righteousness, inspires the needy sinner with boldness and confidence to approach the mercy-seat of a compassionate God. Here, God-given arguments are breathed, and covenant mercy sought. What kind of arguments are these? You will find a sample of them in Psa. xxv. 11: "For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." God's all-powerful name, and the sinner's absolute ruin. Mark! Thy name. My iniquity. No palliation of faults. No extenuation of iniquity. A clean breast is made of every sin, and mercy claimed in JEHOVAH'S gracious and glorious name. Ah, my dear friends, a sinner who knows himself by the teaching of the Holy Ghost knows nothing of his own goodness, despises all idea of good works flowing from him. This reminds me of my now glorified friend O'Leary, who, when spoken to upon the Infirmary Flags at Manchester about the good works God had wrought by him, turned upon the speaker with more warmth than meekness, saying, "It is not true! I never did a good work in my life." I am also reminded of a gracious compliment paid by a free-willer to the character and worth of one now in glory, so near and dear to one in our midst this night. Speaking to a son of the glorified saint,* the free-willer said, "*I never knew a more inconsistent man than your father in all my life.*" When asked for an explanation, he continued, "*He was always running down good works, and there never was a man did more.*" This is a

* The late Mr. James Cunliffe, Handforth, Manchester.

blessed testimony, and gloriously true. Those who talk the most of good works do the least, while those who by grace lose sight of them in the perfections of the Master, do the most. Those who frequent the throne of grace are profuse in their confessions of iniquity and inability—these are prevailing pleas—all-powerful arguments. Tell me, What argument is there so powerful to the tender heart of a mother as the cry of her feeble and suffering babe? So it is with our God. The cries of His weaklings bring Him to their succour and support. But the time would fail me to go through the various phases and features of true experience as described in this precious chapter. We will just notice verses 8 and 9: “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there”—that is, I go forward in sorrowful anticipation of deliverance from my darkness and discontent. In the night I sigh for the morning, and in the day I groan for the night; but in neither do I find the object of my search. *“And backward, but I cannot perceive Him.”* You know as well as I do, that in seasons of deadness we long for His presence who is our life, and in our anxiety we endeavour to trace the beaten track through which a gracious God has led us, and to re-visit the precious spots where He has so lovingly revealed Himself to us. We have tried to sing the same sweet hymns we sang in days gone by, the truths of which have caused our hearts to quiver with delight in His sacred presence, but all in vain. Last week’s comforts fail to comfort me now. The God present upon Tabor was the God absent upon Calvary to the Head of the Church, and He will be the same to each of the living members of the one body. *“On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him.”* In spots where He is known to work in richest grace for the salvation, succour, and security of favoured souls I have sought for the enjoyment of the same Saviour, the same Succourer, the same Security, but I could not behold Him. *“He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him.”* Where He acts in judgment upon the enemies of His people I have tried to see Him acting for me. I have desired to see His outstretched arm defending Zion in the defeat of her foes, and subduing all my enemies under me, but instead of this, my enemies have seemed to increase, and my difficulties have multiplied.

“But He knoweth the way that I take.” In the darkest hour, in the fiercest trial, in the direst temptation under the heaviest load, He knows me, and compels me to cry out with the Psalmist, “O LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest, or winnowest, my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways” (Psa. cxxxix. 1—3). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost know every step of my journey. The Father predestinated the pathway and appointed every particular in

connection therewith. He had all to do with my existence upon earth. My formation in my mother's womb was by His unerring skill. When a weak babe, He graciously preserved me as I clung to the breast of a poor, fragile woman, and of my youthful wanderings I can sing with the poet,—

“ When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,
And brought me up to man.”

Of these times of folly and sin I am frequently led to think, and as my chastened spirit views the spots of secret shame and concealed transgression, my heart groans with sore distress, “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness’ sake, O LORD” (Psa. xxv. 7). It is profitable but not pleasant to be thus exercised, and to see the Lord’s leading in every step of the journey from my birth until now. Had He not led me, but left me to the way that seemed right to my fleshly eyes, down to the depths of eternal perdition I must have wandered, and not have been privileged to sing with Newton,—

“ Determined to save, He watch’d o’er my path,
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame ? ”

Oh, no ! Our God does not work with His children like that. He will get honour to Himself in them, and will not be disgraced by them. Are they dead ? He will quicken them. Do they sin ? He will save them. Are they lost ? He will find them. Do they wander ? He will guide them. He has done all this for me, and caused me to sing with dear old John Kent,—

“ Preserved in Jesus when
My feet made haste to hell ;
And there should I have gone,
But Thou dost all things well.
Thy love was great, Thy mercy free,
Which from the pit delivered me.”

Yes, it is a painful fact, that I was determined to be damned, but He was

“ Determined to save.”

And here I am constrained to acknowledge, to the praise of the glory of His grace, that

“ My feet made haste to hell ; ”

but His feet bore me in the opposite direction, and brought me here to-night with a little melting of the heart, and a little moistening of the eye to testify of His gracious goodness to me.

The blessed Redeemer is fully acquainted with every step of my way through this wilderness world. He came from heaven’s bright glory to identify Himself with me in every temptation of

the way, in every sorrow of my heart, and in every pain and pang of my poor body. Look at those precious declarations given of Him in Isa. lxiii. 9: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." During His life of suffering here below the covenant Surety feelingly bore all the griefs and sorrows, infirmities and sicknesses, of His people, and as He reveals this blessed truth to me, I dare be free with Him, and say,—

"As Man, a Man of sorrows, Thou
Hast suffered every human woe,
And thus enthroned in glory now
Canst pity all Thy saints below.

Sweet thought, my Saviour, but for this
I could not tell my grief to Thee;
Nor hope that Thou, 'midst all Thy bliss
And glory, Lord! couldst feel for me."

While a babe He was chased from the home of His birth by cruel persecution. He spent the days of His youth in the obscurity of His lowly abode at Nazareth. As a Man He was despised and rejected of men, experienced the bitterness of spiritual desertion, had not where to lay His head, oftentimes found no rest for His sorrowing spirit, and at last suffered a violent death at the hands of His remorseless persecutors. Amid the sorrows of the way He sighed, "Now is My soul troubled" (John xii. 27); "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). The way up to Jerusalem was not strewn with roses for His precious feet, and His followers while in the pathway need not expect a better lot. It was the knowledge of His identification with His brethren in all the sorrows of the way, that caused the apostle Paul to write thus for their encouragement: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). And, "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 18).

"True, I am a foolish creature,
And have sinn'd against His grace;
But forgiveness is His nature,
Though He justly hides His face.
*Ere He call'd me well He knew
What a heart like mine would do.*"

The blessed Spirit knows well all the path of my spiritual pilgrimage. As the faithful Witness to the covenant transactions between the Father and the Son, He saw my name in the book of life, and according to the Father's determination agreed to call and quicken me in the set time of favour. That is a glorious truth set forth in the words of the hymn-writer,—

"Eternal, free, electing grace,
Redemption's boundary sets;
And those whom Jesus died to save,
The Spirit ne'er forgets."

No, He forgets them not during their career of sin, unbelief, and enmity. He watches over them to do them good, and bring them into the sweet enjoyment of their spiritual and heavenly inheritance treasured up for them in Christ. In His love and pity He convinces them of sin and seals home a gracious Father's pardon to their hearts. He knows their way of transgression, leads them to see and hate it, takes of Jesus' righteousness and shows it unto them, and blesses them with the knowledge and enjoyment of their justification through the doing and dying of their Surety. Yes, He knoweth the way they take and grieve Him therein, though He bears long with them, and brings them by His grace to sing,—

"And Thou eternal Spirit vast—
What love can Thine transcend?
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,
Indwelling God and Friend."

The way that I take, independently of His guidance, is one of sin, folly, and shame. You see this in Isa. liii. 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; *we have turned every one to his own way.*" This is contrary to God, ay, dead against Him. The folly of it is found in that confession which flows from every quickened spirit, "We have erred and strayed *from Thy ways* like lost sheep." This way of transgression and enmity against God appears right to the natural man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. xvi. 25). But, blessed be the name of our God, none of His children can wander to death and destruction. Concerning each of His wanderers He says, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comfort unto him and to his mourners" (Isa. lvii. 17, 18).

"*He knoweth the way that I take,*" or, as you read in the margin, "*the way that is with me.*" From the moment pardon is experienced by the living child of God to his entrance into glory, temptation, trial, and tribulation are sure to attend him. You see this in Luke's account of apostolic confirmation given in Acts xiv. 22: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The beaten track to glory is one of tribulation, and in it we can sometimes sigh,

"Steep and thorny is the way
Leading on to our perfection."

You also see it in the words of the elder in Rev. vii. 16: "These

are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Walking in sweet agreement with God through a country which is hostile to Him is sure to beget enmity, opposition, and persecution. Enemies of God are sure to separate His friends from their company, who will learn, in the school of painful but profitable experience, to dwell, in loneliness and isolation, with Him. His redeemed and gathered ones will learn what that means as recorded in Psa. cvii. 4—7: "They wandered in the wilderness in a *solitary way*; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the *right way*, that they might go to a city of habitation." This solitary way will oftentimes appear anything but the right one, yet, while JEHOVAH'S promise to be with His people in all their way home, and never leave or forsake them, holds good, right the way must be.

"'Tis the right way,' though dark and rough;
Mysterious, yet 'tis plain enough:
And we, when faith is changed to sight,
Shall know the ways of God are right.

'Tis the right way,' when pain and loss
Our flatt'ring expectations cross:
And, if our souls the end could view,
We should approve the pathway too."

Blessed be God, "*He knoweth the way that is with me.*" It is the King's highway to the celestial city. Though solitary and rough, it is "The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there" (Isa. xxxv. 8, 9). All found in it are holy in the holiness of Christ, who is their sanctification. They are elect of God, separated by sovereign decree from the corrupt mass in the midst of which they are found. Their holiness, or separation, is manifested by the presence of their God with them, according to the saying of Moses, "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Exod. xxxiii. 16). This way is described by Paul as "*a new and living way*" (Heb. x. 20). New in contrast to the old law of ceremonies and ordinances. Living, in the person of a risen, ascended, and living Christ at God's right hand, in contrast to the slain, dead, and unrevived sacrifices of an obsolete economy. He who is the Way knoweth all who are in Him, and for their guidance and direction has left on record this precious declaration, "I am the Way, the

Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John xiv. 6). In love and grace a covenant-keeping JEHOVAH goes before His people in the Way, in goodness and mercy He follows them, with pity and compassion He attends them, His everlasting arms are underneath them, while He is the shelter and defence in every hour of danger. His voice of guiding grace, as heard resounding from the far back settlements of eternity, is sweetly expressed in that rich cluster of inspired truths, Isa. xxx. 18—21: "And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee. And though the LORD give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy Teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teachers." Who are these Teachers? JEHOVAH in His Trinity of persons, according to Isa. liv. 13, and John vi. 45: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." But notice the conclusion of our quotation from Isa. xxx.: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the Way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." And here we bless Him for that gracious promise of guidance and security given in Exod. xxiii. 20: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." We now come to notice—

II.—THE TRIAL—"When He hath tried me." Whatever be the blessings, privileges, and immunities of the pilgrims in the pathway to glory, they have no immunity from trial and tribulation.

"The souls that would to Jesus press
Must fix this firm and sure,
That tribulation, more or less,
They must and shall endure."

Wherever God has begun His good work of grace He will test and prove it in every point and particular thereof. See how blessedly this is stated in 1 Pet. i. 3—7: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that *the trial*

of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Every grace communicated by the Holy Ghost to an elect and regenerate sinner will most assuredly be tested and tried by God, men, and devils. To encourage the tried and tempted in the household of faith the apostle James writes: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing ~~this~~, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. i. 2—4). Superficial religionists, whose religion is not skin deep, who never received a scratch from the devil, can boast of their partiality to practical James; but what think they of his experience? They know nothing of his spiritual arithmetic, his counting it all joy to fall into divers temptations. We are tried in our faith and every grace when God leaves us to know and feel our own weakness and utter inability to produce or practise one spiritual grace, and our beings shut up to His performing in us the things He has appointed for us. As in the case of Job, reverses in providence, disappointments, and distresses in the family, and afflictions in body and mind, sorely try our faith, our patience, and our hope. Then come the terrible onslaughts of Satan—the workings of unbelief—the broodings of infidel thoughts—the surgings of indwelling corruption—the risings of awful blasphemies—and the blight of accursed indifference. God left Abraham, and Abraham thus was tried. He failed, but his faith stood the fiery test. Like Peter, he was shaken, and sifted, and winnowed; but his faith, the faith of the operation of God, failed not. We see, too, that the harlot of Jericho, our dear sister Rahab, was blessed with precious faith, while she was characterised by infirmity. So it will be with us who are favoured with the possession of like precious faith. The desolating winds of adversity, temptation, blasphemy, and infidelity may shake us and our faith, but they will only cause it to take deeper and firmer root in the clefts of the Rock of eternal ages. Terrible trials are but for a season. Weeping because of them endures but for a night, but joy cometh in the morning of God's sunshine. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). Blessed be God for this glorious fact, *The fiercer the furnace the firmer the faith.*

" Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there."

III.—THE PROOF—"I shall come forth as gold." This is the language of calm assurance in the midst of conflict—of firm

faith surrounded by fierce fires. As gold in the furnace loses nothing but dross, so the tried and tempted people of God, in the midst of the flames of affliction, temptation, and persecution, lose nothing but that which is earthy, and which drags and draws them down from the enjoyment of heavenly realities. "The precious sons of Zion *are* comparable to fine gold" (Lam. iv. 2). Why? Because gold, in the Scriptures of truth, represents *preciousness, permanency, and perfection*: so the elect and redeemed of God are precious to Him. Precious, when in the counsels of eternity He gave them to the safe keeping of the Surety of the covenant.

" Oh what love the Father bore us!
Oh how precious in His sight!
When He gave the Church to Jesus,
Jesus, His whole soul's delight."

Since then He seems to have put all nature under contribution, and to have ransacked heaven's vocabulary to find endearing terms to express His estimate and appreciation of His eternally loved people. He styles them, "*His peculiar treasure*" (Psa. cxxxv. 4), "*a crown of glory, a royal diadem*" (Isa. lxii. 3), "*the stones of a crown*" (Zech. ix. 16), "*My jewels, or special treasure*" (Mal. iii. 17). They are dear to Him as His own honour, life, and love. The Father loved them and chose them. The Son loved them and gave His life for them. The Spirit loves them and has eternally cast in His lot with them. Concerning them, the Son said to the Father, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 23). In this consists the *permanency* of their persons and privileges. "They shall never perish" (John x. 28). Their faith shall not fail (Luke xxii. 32). Their hope abides sure and stedfast (Heb. vi. 19). "He which hath begun a good work in *them* will perform, or *finish*, it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). In this is secured their *perfection*. But this perfection must be revealed in the midst of the Lord's fire which is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem (Isa. xxxi. 9). But however hot the fire, or manifold the meltings may be, the Refiner sits by and will see to it that no harm or hurt shall attend the tried one. He will regulate the heat, purge away the dross from the work of His hands, cause the spirit to bow in true submission, spiritual resignation, and sweet acquiescence to His righteous dealings. By Him, who is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning (Isa. iv. 4), He graciously whispers:

" Then trust Me, and fear not; thy life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power;
In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,
To make thee at length in My likeness to shine."

In eternity past the Father predestinated His people conformed to the image of His Son. In time, by His atoning work, and in His adorable person, the Son presents them perfect, spotless,

holy, and without blame before the presence of the Father. In the school of painful but profitable experience—in the furnace, in the fire, and in the flame, the Holy Ghost purges, purifies, and perfects the living members of faith's family. He *purges from sin* by precious atoning blood. He *purifies from self* by His infallible truth, and He *perfects the soul* in Divine knowledge, causing it to cease from its repinings against the trying dispensations of a loving Father's hand, and to know what that means—

“ Sweet in the confidence of faith,
To trust His firm decrees ;
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His.”

This was Job's confidence, this was Job's comfort. He knew that, as God's gold in God's furnace, He was preserved in God's hand, and, let come what would, “ The Lord *would* perfect that which concerned *him*, and *would* not forsake the work of *His* own hands ” (Psa. cxxxviii. 8).

HYMN.

JEHOVAH hath said, 'tis left on record,
“ The righteous are one with Jesus the Lord ; ”
At all times He loves them, 'twas for them He died,
Yet often He proves them, for grace must be tried.

When faint in the way, or lifeless and cold,
Or sunk in dismay, and none to uphold ;
Yet firm to His promise thy God shall abide ;
But grace, in the furnace, shall surely be tried.

With Him on the mount to-day thou shalt be
Indulg'd by thy Lord, His glory to see ;
Yet, tho' He caress thee, and call thee His bride ;
Yet grace, tho' He bless thee, shall surely be tried.

The tempest will blow, the billows shall swell,
Thy soul full of woe, shall pass as thro' hell ;
And all this to prove thee, to stain thy curs'd pride ;
He loves thee for ever, but grace must be tried.

He will not forsake, but surely perform
His word, tho' He take His way in the storm ;
Yea, oft in the clouds of dejection He'll ride,
Because He's determin'd His grace shall be tried.

As gold from the flame, He'll bring *us* at last,
To praise Him for all through which *we* have pass'd ;
Then love everlasting *our* griefs shall repay,
And God, from our eyes, wipe all sorrow away.

JOHN KENT.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

DIVINE DESIRES AND DOINGS.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, NEW ENGLAND ROAD, BRIGHTON,
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth."—Job xxiii. 13.

RESTLESSNESS, disappointment, and dissatisfaction make up the lot of favoured mortals here below. It matters not what may be the number of temporal blessings and privileges heaped upon them by a Sovereign God, under the Sun, and apart from the Sun of Righteousness, there is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. With the experience of what we are in ourselves and the fleeting state of things around us, we may well say:—

"Change is our portion here!
E'en in the heavenly road,
In faith, and hope, and holy fear,
In love towards our God,
How often we distrust that word,
'I will be with Thee,' saith the Lord."

We are never long at one stay—never long in the enjoyment of God's temporal and spiritual blessings and mercies. We who have been taken gently and lovingly by the hand, and drawn aside from the world and its pleasures, are blessed with the knowledge that we are not associated with those described in Psalm lv. 19: "Because they have no changes therefore they fear not God." We have our changes, and in the midst of the experience of them we find now and then that we do fear Him. If He bless us with His light, we know that darkness will come. If He lead us into the glorious sunshine of His presence, we know that the gloom of His absence is approaching—our Sun will sink beneath our spiritual horizon. It is well for us to know when we are in the darkness that it is ours to wait and watch for the Master's coming and guidance—to wait for Him as we read

in Isaiah l. 10: "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." Do you notice that? The very character is described as fearing the Lord, yet walking in darkness; obeying the voice of God's Servant, His Christ, yet having no light; following the Master in the beaten track of tribulation; treading in the footprints He has left behind Him on the sands of the desert which are discerned only by His much-loved pilgrims. His injunction to each of these is: "Trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon *thy* God." It is a blessed privilege to be taught how to wait for the Master's coming, for the tread of His feet, the whispers of His grace, the outpourings of His love, and the communications of His grace with which He cheers and encourages the hearts of His people in the midst of their distractions and distresses here below.

You see what Luke says in Acts xiv. 22: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom." That is the confirmation I like, though my flesh likes it not, for spiritual confirmation can never be acceptable to the old Adam nature. It is through *much*, not *little*, tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God. Not only into the kingdom of glory yonder, but spiritually and intelligently into the kingdom of grace here we must pass through much tribulation. I stand here as a living witness to the truth of this spiritual and experimental reality, and that the position of a witness for Christ is not the cosy and comfortable business I once thought it to be. A God-sent minister of Christ cannot retire from his preaching, his loved employ, and at will lay his weary head upon his pillow and rest. I know he cannot. There are many sleepless hours and painful exercises for him to pass through, and many solemn yet salutary reckonings up in the court of conscience before his God in respect to those to whom he has delivered his message. In these divisions of the spiritual Reuben, there are great searchings of heart as the Spirit-taught one feels his position before a heart-searching God. Job is a striking illustration of that which we hear in the voice which comes from beyond the floods of sin and death, and recorded in Rev. vii. 13, 14: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This "great tribulation" entered deeply into Job's experience, and through it he entered into the kingdom of God, grace, and glory, as we see from the whole of his book. Notice the first declaration of JEHOVAH'S mind concerning him: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (chap. i. 1). He was a praying

man, and remembered His children before the Lord each day. He said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." He knew, though they might be decent and respectable children, a credit to their God-fearing father, yet their hearts naturally were not a particle better than the most reprobate in creation. This is a solemn truth, which may find out some of you who are fathers. It is a sorrowful yet salutary conviction in my mind, that I cannot see a folly or infirmity in my children but it was derived from me. Oh! this brings me down in spirit before God, begging Him to pardon and forgive the heart-sins of my children for His great name's sake.

Though Job was perfect and upright, a God-fearer, and one that eschewed evil, yet he had no immunity from temptation and tribulation. Satan attacked him in his possessions when the Sabeans and Chaldeans slew his servants and stole his cattle. God tried him when the lightning from His treasures and the wind from His fists destroyed his children. Satan worried him when he smote his body with boils from the sole of his foot to his crown. It is a glorious fact that none of these could really hurt or destroy poor Job, for Satan, the lightning, and the wind could only go forth at God's command. Not one thing can happen by blind chance to a child of God; not a withering blast from hell; not a cheering blessing from above; not an apparent curse—I say apparent, for, thanks be to God, there is no curse for His children. Nothing can happen to them but by His sovereign will. He is with them when the waters of tribulation roar and swell around them. All such waters are in the hollow of His hand; they shall assuage while His loved ones remain in safety and secure. If you read this book with an impartial, unprejudiced mind, independently of the light of God, you will conclude that Job was not so patient after all. While he had to do with God in His providence alone, and man appeared not on the scene, he "sinned not nor charged God foolishly." When he opened his mouth in the presence of his three friends, bitter cursing and withering sarcasm characterised him. Judging him from this, you are ready to say, If Job was the patient man God describes him, and possessed the patience ascribed to him, would he not have spoken more gently and kindly to those who, with all their mistakes, were seeking his good? But, with all our questionings, God looked upon him as patient, perfect, and upright, while those against whom Job's withering invectives were launched found acceptance with God for Job's sake. See chapter xlii. 7, 8: "And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. Therefore now take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and

My servant Job shall pray for you : lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job."

Now look at Job's experience. My mind is now directed to chapter xiii. 20—26: "Withdraw Thine hand far from me : and let not Thy dread make me afraid." This is the longing desire of every living child of God. Notice Job's thirst for communion with his God: "Then call Thou, and I will answer : or let me speak, and answer Thou me." He now breathes a strange request: "How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin." I do not pray such a prayer as that. I do not desire to know the number of my transgressions, sins, and iniquities, for I know too many already. So numerous are they in my remembrance and present experience that I am a burden to myself. I do know what that means, "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. vii. 18). And I feel much of the experience set forth in Ezek. xxxvi. 31: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." This keeps me from asking for further discoveries of my sinfulness and corruption. Job continues his inquiry, "Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thine enemy?" He had just before been asking God for this though he knew it not. He begged to know the number of his iniquities and the measure of his sins, little thinking that the sight of these would hide the face of his covenant God from him. Sin felt forms an intervening cloud between the spiritual eye of a child of God and its loving Father. I do not think Job ever prayed this prayer after his deliverance from spiritual darkness. But here he adds, "Wilt Thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt Thou pursue the dry stubble?" He had been asking for all this, and in the answer he received was taught more and more of the bitterness of sin. He says, "For Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." This bitter experience has oftentimes caused me to cry, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Psa. xxv. 7). It is an awful thing to have the sins of our youth brought to our remembrance when we are in the dark and feel the searching eye of a sin-hating God upon us. Expressions heard in childhood frequently remain impressed upon the mind. This is one which has tarried with me through many long years: "*In the days of our unregeneracy we could trifle with sins as so many weak and crawling worms which have proved in after years to be so many biting, fiery serpents.*" With an experience like this we may well sigh,—

"Weary of earth, myself, and sin,
Dear Jesus, set me free !

And to Thy glory take me in,
For there I long to be."

But notice Job's experience portrayed in the portion of the chapter preceding the text. At the second verse he says, "Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning." His groaning was not heavier than his stroke, like that of the formalist and Pharisee. The groans of the hypocrite are heard in public, while those of the true-born child of God are those which God alone can hear. Turn with me to Psalm xxxii. 3: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Silent yet roaring! How can that be? It was inside roaring produced and perceived by God Himself. You will see this in Rom. viii. 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." You may rest assured that the child of God who has learned not to cast his pearls before swine, or holy communications before dogs, will enter into his closet, shut his door, and his window too, before he pours the breathings of the Spirit into the ears of his Father. Praying is for God's ears, preaching for man's. Jesus preached to the many, and prayed with the few; but far more frequently alone.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervour of Thy prayer;
The desert Thy temptation knew,
Thy conflict and Thy victory too."

Job proceeds, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" Mark! Job was not seeking salvation, faith, peace, or quietness: but "HIM." That glorious "HIM" of whom we read in the Song of Solomon, yet find no mention of His name. "HIM," of whom Moses and the prophets did write. "HIM," the Saviour of His lost ones, the Confidence of His doubting ones, the Peace of His people, and the Rest of His weary pilgrims. "HIM," God's Beloved, and my Beloved, who took me to His loved embrace before the worlds were framed, who went down to the depths of my doom, and endured my damnation for me—whose sacred hands, and feet, and side were pierced for me, the sight of which melts my heart and draws it out with love to Him. This is He who from the days of my youth has dealt so tenderly with me, never did me a wrong turn, and never would have a wrong word spoken of me without settling accounts with my defamers. I know that this is His way of dealing with the troublers of His people. I have seen His acts of judgment again and again when His foot crushed those proud oppressors whose tongues wagged against His tried and tempted children. That is a solemn truth in 2 Thess. i. 6: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." When I am

reminded of this, it makes me careful as to what I say concerning those who are near and dear to "HIM." This may be a word of counsel for some of you. To find "HIM" is life and peace. "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." Which is the most powerful argument in the ears of a mother? It is the cry of want, weakness, and pain from her suffering babe. There is nothing so quick of apprehension as a tender mother's ear. Can a member of my Lord's mystical body upon earth cry out with pain and He remain inattentive in heaven? Never! There is not a cry, a want, a desire expressed by a seeming uncomely member of my Lord's body that escapes the ear of its sympathising Head.

" His human heart He still retains
Though throned in highest bliss ;
And feels each tempted member's pains,
For our affliction's His."

Notice the experience set forth in the 8th and 9th verses :
" Behold, I go forward, but He is not there." I frequently want to go before Him and anticipate His providing hand ; but He will not be anticipated. He teaches me by painful process what that means—

" No sinner can be beforehand with Thee,
Thy grace is almighty, *preventing*, and free."

Day by day He supplies us with the bounties of His hand, and as our days, not day, shall our strength be. In grace He gives us no stock in hand, for He knows best how to meet our daily and hourly need. If we attempt to hoard up His gracious and providential gifts, He will create a waster to destroy (Isa. liv. 16), and that not in a way palatable to our fleshly inclinations. "And backward, but I cannot perceive Him." I try to go back to the old spots where blessings abounded, but there I find Him not. "*On the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him.*" There I see Him working graciously for some who are near and dear to Him, but I feel there is no blessing for me. "*He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.*" There I see Him doing marvellous things with His own right hand and His holy arm, but He seems not to work for me. Yet, "*He knoweth the way that I take.*" Oh, how our proud nature rebels against the way of our Lord's appointing! I would sweep pain and perplexity outside my door. I would be the heartiest fellow in all God's creation; but I cannot—He will not allow me to be so. That is not His way with me, yet at times I can thank Him for pain as well as for pleasure, for bitters as well as for sweets, for darkness as well as for light, for burdens as well as for rest, knowing that each infirmity I carry to the throne of grace is a call upon Him for the manifestation of His covenant compassion. When I am ignorant of the way of His dealings with me, He teaches me to cry, "Lord,

make Thy way straight before my face" (Psa. v. 8). The fleshly religionist can cry, Let me have my own way; but the Spirit-taught pilgrim cries:

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me."

Let me see that way sparkling with Thy promises, paved with Thy love, and traced with the prints of the feet of my Lord, who trod every step of the beaten path of tribulation before me to the heavenly Jerusalem above. "*When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" When He has tried me in my faith and hope, and in every one of His gracious communications, when He has tried me in providence, purse, and possessions, and swept everything away but Himself, I shall know that I am precious, pure, and perfect in His eyes. It is then I can sing in my sighing:

"And when *my* dearest comforts fall
Before His sovereign will,
He never takes away *my* all,
Himself He gives *me* still."

That is worth knowing and feeling, by which the child of God can face all doubts and devils, and in the direst pangs of spiritual desertion like Job's Lord, cry, "My God, My God."

"*My foot hath held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips.*" And I know the truthfulness of all this, thank God. Mark you, these form something more than words in a book. They are commands spoken home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Since the moment the commandment of His lips freed me from the claims and curse of the law I could not go back to the dark shades of Sinai. Deliverance from the cold regions of legality once experienced is the lot of the child of grace for ever. True, he will groan under the burden of a body of death, the evil surrounding him, and the sin indwelling him; but delivered from old covenant ground, and once placed upon new covenant ground, there he must abide. We may sin as foully as Noah, Lot, or David; but, ask us how we are to be saved therefrom, and we will tell you that we know of no salvation but that which flows in the channel of JEHOVAH'S free, sovereign, and uninfluenced grace. "*I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than ny necessary food.*" The words, not of my mouth, but of His. If He did not convey His own words from my exercised heart and trembling lips, to your hearts, you would retire from this place disappointed and discontented.

"*But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?*" Man's "*ifs*" and "*but*s" I do not like. God's "*but*s" are glorious. In the experience of this, Joseph Irons sang so sweetly:

"My *ifs* and *buts* I laid aside,
And now in *shalls* and *wills* abide."

I have no desire to waste your time in speaking against fleshly free-willers, I wish to get away from that, for I know it will yield no consolation to the flock of slaughter. If God's pure truth is preached and spiritual provision is set before the living in Jerusalem, it will prove to be nought but gravel stones in the mouths of mere professors. Mark well that glorious "*But*" in Eph. ii. 4: "BUT God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." That "*But*" is a free-grace breakwater over which the floods of corruption and condemnation cannot pass to destroy the faith, hope, and confidence of the living children. Dead in sins yet loved of God! It seems almost too good to be true, yet it is true in the experience of all the Spirit-taught children. We will notice—

JEHOVAH'S DECREES—"But He is in one mind." It is no small mercy for a man to have a mind and will of his own, whose acts flow from righteous principles. A master with a firm will may rule his house with honour and integrity. A father with a wavering will must have his children rulers in his house. A husband, whose wife can twirl him round her fingers is a pitiable object. I remember, when I was residing at Haydock, years ago, preaching one evening from 2 Peter i. 1, on "like precious faith," and "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The next morning I met a dear old lady, who looked me in the face and said, "I have found it out at last, that God can make use of any sort of a thing for the comfort of His dear people!" You may depend upon it, I felt mightily flattered. She afterward became the teacher of our young women's class in the Sunday-school. One Sunday afternoon she was speaking to her scholars from Eph. v. 33: "And the wife see that she reverence her husband." She said to them, "It may come round in the order of God's providence that you will be drawn in contact with some of the opposite sex. Matching and pairing times will come. Now let me warn you against those young men who will pour soft and senseless words into your ears. You may take my word for it, if a woman is married to such a man, it will take a miracle to make her reverence him." That dear old creature possessed a firm will and a bit of good common sense. It is a marvellous mercy to possess a sound judgment and a good understanding in the fear of the Lord, and to be brought to the sweet enjoyment of this precious fact, that our God and Father has a will of His own from which He never diverges. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. iv. 35).

We find a statement of the Father's will in Eph. i., while

Eph. ii. describes His working out that will. What He wills He works, and neither miscarriage, imperfection, nor failure can ever be found in either. Look at Eph. i. 5: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, *according to the good pleasure of His will.*" Read the 9th verse: "*Having made known unto us the mystery of His will,* according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." Mark well the 11th verse: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of *Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.*" The mercy to me is to have an interest in the gracious provisions of the Father's righteous will. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his way" (James i. 8). A God of one mind is sure and certain in all His designs and doings. When I was a lad in a Sunday School in Manchester, the clergyman of the Church and his teachers would have the scholars commit to memory large portions of the Scriptures. Subjects were given to us and we had to search for proof. One subject was, "*The Immutability of God.*" I searched the Book, learned the texts, and trembled at the truth. Look at the declaration of Balaam, or rather the declaration of the Spirit by Balaam: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" The truth of God was in Balaam's mouth while Satan's lie influenced his heart. He was utterly destitute of every gracious movement of the Spirit. This fact produces in me great searchings of heart. What am I? Do I preach the truth of God with my heart unmoved? No, blessed be God, I do not. Turn to 1 Sam. xv. 29: "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man that He should repent." Look at the words of our text: "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth even that He doeth." And none of us can surely forget His encouraging words to His doubting, fearing children in Mal. iii. 6: "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Come with me to Paul's glorious declaration of Divine sovereignty in Rom. xi. 29: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"—that is, without any change of mind on God's part. Has He gifts of grace for us in Christ? They must be given to, and experienced by, us. Did He bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the foundation of the world? The blessings shall be bestowed. In blessing He blesses and will bless to the ages of eternity. Now notice that glorious statement of JEHOVAH'S immutability in James i. 17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." These are the good and perfect gifts which are treasured up in

the Son of the Father's love for the seed royal of heaven. In the covenant transactions between the Father and the Son for an eternally-loved and chosen people the blessed Spirit was the Witness, and will witness to the same in the living experience of every jewel of election love. Every blessing, every promise is sure to all the seed (Rom. iv. 16). Our God does not say one thing to-day and another to-morrow. He does not begin His work of grace and leave us, poor mutable things, to finish it. He gives us not a stock of grace for us to improve upon it. That would be poor encouragement to me. I will tell you what will do for a poor incorrigible like me:—

“ Grace will complete what grace begins
To save from sorrows and from sins :
The work that Jesus undertakes
JEHOVAH-JESUS ne'er forsakes.”

JEHOVAH'S DETERMINATION — “And who can turn Him?” No, He cannot be turned from His purpose, be it a purpose of mercy to my redeemed spirit, or one of judgment upon my wretched flesh, for He has nought but mercy for my spirit—He has nought but judgment for my wretched flesh. Is He a God of love? “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. xii. 6). From that order none can turn Him, and to the knowledge of this Job was no stranger. Turn to Job xii. 13, 14: “With Him is wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding. Behold, He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.” When He shuts up an elect and redeemed man, there is no opening, no way of escape for him until He who shuts up opens a door of hope, and Christ, the Way of escape from wrath and condemnation, is graciously revealed. Who can turn Him? The infirmities and failings of Peter caused a compassionate Jesus to turn and look love and pity into his forgetful heart, which caused him to go out and weep bitterly (Luke xxii. 61, 62). Does JEHOVAH love His Ephraim? Let Ephraim wander, sin, and rebel, yet his God and Father cannot be turned from His determination to save him. See Hosea xi. 8, 9: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man.”

“ His cov'nant of grace all blessings secures ;
Believers, rejoice, for all things are yours ;
Your God from His purpose shall never remove,
But love you, and bless you, and rest in His love.”

JEHOVAH'S DESIRE — “And what His soul desireth.” Look at this according to that declaration of His universal

sovereignty in Psalm cxxxv. 6: "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, and in the seas, and in all deep places." In heaven, in covenant decrees—in earth, in redemption wonders—in all deep places, in regeneration power. In heaven, among elect angels and glorified saints—in earth, among weary and wayworn pilgrims—in all deep places, among His drooping and desponding captives who are longing for home.

"Keep silence, all created things,
And wait your Maker's nod;
My soul stands trembling while she sings
The honours of her God.

Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on His firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to BE."

But see! His soul desires the salvation of His elect from sin their sanctification to Himself, and their glorification with Himself to all eternity. Paul says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3). This is the separation of His people to Himself from the world, self, sin, and Satan. Job knew something of this when he said to God, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee, Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine own hands" (Job xiv. 15). This is blessedly set forth in Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14: "For the LORD hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." He has made provision for this and will have it accomplished. Eternal redemption! Everlasting righteousness! Infinite satisfaction! Christ made to His people their Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption, and Glory. He will dwell in them down here. They shall dwell with Him up yonder. All in accordance with His decree, determination, desire, and good pleasure.

JEHOVAH'S DOINGS: "Even that He doeth." I love to contemplate the activities of God in and for His own. Not only the Father's activities in covenant, the Son's activities in redemption, but the blessed Spirit's activities in heart experience. By His teaching we are brought to see ourselves depraved, defiled, and deceitful in heart, lip, and life. What does God desire? Purity in His people. He will do this by creating a new and Divine nature in them and causing them to see all their purity in Him. He will bring them as filthy sinners to the full, free fountain of atoning blood, wash them from all their filthiness, and cause them to sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. i. 5, 6). Are they naked? He will provide the clothing, and clothe them, causing them to praise and adore Him in the language of Isa. lxi. 10: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be

joyful in my God : for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." What a mercy He has prepared the clothing, and clothes His people, for if the Lord allowed me to put one stitch in the robe of His righteousness, I should look at it to all eternity, and not on Him. He desires the nourishment, strength, and establishment of His weary, waiting, and wavering ones, and as "the God of all grace" He will do it all for them. When flesh and heart shall fail, and we come to that dread moment when our spirits shall be stripped of their fleshly covering, then, true to His promise as a covenant God, He will carry us safely to our eternal home, where He shall lead, feed, and feast them with uninterrupted bliss and blessedness. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17).

Oh, may it be your blessed lot and mine to know by the Spirit more of these blessed truths. Amen.

H Y M N.

UNCHANGEABLE Jesus, Thy praises we sing,
And own Thee our Prophet, our Priest, and our King ;
O give us while singing sweet tastes of Thy love,
To raise our affections to treasures above.

Unchangeable Jesus, our wav'nings we own,
Acknowledge with sorrow our sins at Thy throne ;
We surely should perish, so changing are we,
But that Thy free favour is firm as 'tis free.

Unchangeable Jesus, O teach us at length,
In no way to lean on our wisdom and strength ;
Since moon-like our graces now wax and now wane,
But, sun-like, Thy favour is ever the same.

Unchangeable Jesus, in whom we'd confide,
Thy sunshine of goodness does ever abide ;
O give us on Thee and Thy promise to lean,
And trust Thou art shining when clouds intervene.

Unchangeable Jesus, the day will soon come,
When all Thy dear loved ones shall see at home ;
O then may our voices add strength to the song,
That rolls through long ages Thy praises along.

ANON.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

REGENERATION.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, NEW ENGLAND ROAD, BRIGHTON,
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 3RD, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."—James i. 18.

HE who travelled many a long and weary journey to seek, find, and save His lost ones, once met with a poor waif and stray of Samaritan society, to whom He graciously said, "If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water" (John iv. 10). In this we see a vast difference to that which He spake to the learned and religious ruler of the Jews, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John iii. 7). Why should our Lord thus address Himself to Nicodemus? The reason is clear and evident to my mind. The ruler of the Jews, because of his education, position, and *piety*, would consider himself fit for the honours of heaven, and also a proper recipient of the blessings, bounties, and benefits God had to bestow. Now Christ came for the purpose of teaching such that they needed God's regenerating grace just as much as the most corrupt and degraded in creation. You see the vast social disparity existing between the characters introduced in the third and fourth chapters of John's Gospel. Yet the Lord meets the pious ruler with the truth: "Ye must be born again;" but He draws the profligate woman with the gracious request: "Give Me to drink." He will drink in purest grace out of the pitcher of the profligate, while He will keep the other at a distance by insisting upon the necessity of spiritual regeneration. He will gather around Him the dregs of society, while He will say to the religious and the refined: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before

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you" (Matt. xxi. 31). I have a very solemn impression in my mind, that were it possible for Jesus Christ to preach again upon this earth, He would not say, "Ye must be born again," to the harlots, drunkards, and thieves, but would declare that solemn truth to the whole bench of bishops, and to those *pious* Dissenters, the greater portion of whose religion consists in railing against the Establishment. Oh! my dear friends, God has so graciously dealt with me, and given me to know my membership with the spiritual Church of Christ, that I see something to exercise my mind, and occupy my time, vastly higher than Conformity or Non-Conformity, Protestantism or Popery, Calvinism or Arminianism. There is something deeper, higher, and more important than all these to me. When I lay my weary head upon the pillow for the last time, and the solemnities of eternity are bursting upon me, mere Protestantism will serve me but little. What will a Calvinistic creed, cold and clear, avail me then? Nothing at all. With me the mere questions of Protestantism or Popery, Calvinism or Arminianism, are minor matters. The vital question with us to-night is, Life or death? Here we are a little company appearing before God, and whatever profession of religion we may make, we are either dead in sin or we are the living children of God. We are either the children of the bond-woman or children of the free-woman—the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of all true believers. It is a solemn and searching truth, that we now stand among that people who are loved with an everlasting love (Jer. xxxi. 3), or we are classed with "The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever" (Mal. i. 4). We are either elect and loved, or reprobate and rejected; the redeemed of the Lord, or the slaves of the devil; the fruit of the Redeemer's soul travail, or the seed of the serpent. It is the loving John, not *doctrinal* Paul, or *practical* James, who says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil" (1 John iii. 10). This is very plain speaking for a loving, gentle, and forbearing disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus. Yet he used pungent, trenchant, separating words, which find scant favour with the effeminate religionists of the present day. With these the prohibited honey of human expediency abounds, the leaven of malice and hypocrisy predominates, while the salt of the covenant is lacking in all their sacrifices. I have thus spoken plainly because I would endeavour to lead your minds into an intelligent and experimental understanding of the glorious truths set before us in the words of my text:—

"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

I.—THE PERSONS—"Us." Their natural character and spiritual calling.

II.—THE AUTHOR of their spiritual existence—"Begat He us."

III.—THE MOTIVE—"His own will."

IV.—THE MEANS—"The Word of truth."

V.—THE DESIGN—"That we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

I.—THE PERSONS—"Us." Their natural character and spiritual calling. The apostle James was writing to those who were spiritually one with him in the covenant verities of a covenant God. They were spiritually one with Christ, and enjoyed in His season, salvation, succour, security, and sympathy. Salvation! He is the Salvation of His people. Succour! He is all the Support they need. Security! In Him there is no condemnation or danger. Sympathy!

"Sweet thought! my Saviour, but for this
I could not tell my grief to Thee:
Nor hope that Thou midst all Thy bliss
And glory, Lord! couldst feel for me."

As we look at the children of God as described in their natural state, we see them very far from God. How far? I do not desire to speak in stronger terms than the Scriptures warrant. Yet I do love to have matters stated aright when we are dealing with the things of God. I hate compromise, for failure is sure to attend it. In the days of "Good Queen Bess" as she is styled, the Lambeth Articles, purely Calvinistic, were drawn up, and presented to her for her approval; but they were too clear and straight for Her Protestant Majesty. She did not like them. The total depravity of man was stated too plainly. The declaration that man is *gone altogether* from original righteousness was too levelling. This proves that Protestants may protest against Popery while they are destitute of the love, life, and liberty of God. Elizabeth's dislike to God's clear truth brought about that compromise with error found in the ninth Article in the Church of England: "*Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.*" That sounds a little nicer to dignified human nature than the sweeping assertion that man is wholly dead and totally depraved. The Scriptural declaration that universal man by nature is dead in sin, is anything but sweet to the fleshly religious palate, and extremely distasteful to the carnal mind which is enmity against God. Hence Satan finds a necessity to tone down the terrible declarations of God's written Word concerning the desperate wickedness of fallen humanity. Almost on every hand we find the acknowledgment that man is sick, diseased: but not dead; and "another Gospel," which is not "the Gospel," is preached, which cannot meet the case of those who are only naturally enlightened to the truth of God.

"CHRIST glories to save, not the HALF-ruined soul,
But the soul that feels UTTERLY lost;
The DEAD, not the DYING, He came to make whole—
As Lazarus once lived to boast."

God's truth is, that man is *gone altogether* from original righteousness, and is in his own nature *wholly evil*, not inclined to it. This finds a place in the creed and confidence of every sinner born again. Look at the various portions of the Word in which you find reference made to the great and glorious work of regeneration. I will not use the word *change*, which oftentimes conveys an erroneous view to the minds of many. Regeneration is vastly more than change, it is a new creation, a spiritual resurrection. Nothing but Divine statements will do for Divinely enlightened minds. Turn with me to Eph. i. 1: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Is not that a shocking state? Yet you and I were there. We walked according to the course of this world, caring nothing for God or the world to come. We were without hope—without Christ—without God—at Satan's beck—determined to enjoy that which nature desires. But let us read on: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Did you notice that word "*fulfilling*?" It means to carry into effect the depraved desires of the natural mind, or to fill up with avidity and determination the lusts of the flesh. "And were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But God." Man's *but*s I do not care for. God's *but*s yield sweet delight to exercised souls. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ." By nature, dead in sins. By grace, quickened into spiritual life by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Now turn to Titus iii. 5—7. Here we see man's state by nature described in connection with God's glorious work of regeneration: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." As we look at the professing Church in the present day, and judge concerning it in the light of God's truth, we shall see and know that the last words aptly describe it—"living in malice and envy." I have seen sufficient jealousy in the pulpit, and envy in the pews, to damn the whole of Christendom. This may appear strong to some of you, yet before Him whom I serve I say it, not without some little hesitation, but by a felt necessity which He has laid upon me. He has given me to know that all the religion worth having is that which He conveys and communicates to my heart in the time of my spiritual necessity. Let us continue with this Scripture: "*But after that.*" Might we not expect after such awful dealing and doing that the indignation, wrath, and fury of JEHOVAH would be poured out upon these seeming incorrigibles? Indeed we might. Yet, contrary to our judg-

ment, "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Here God's sovereign act of regeneration is set forth under two figures, *washing* and *renewing*. These the Saviour employed when declaring the same truth to Nicodemus as recorded in John iii. 5, 8. Water and Wind. In the fifth verse He said, "Except a man be *born of water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What water is this? Not that transparent fluid which God has so kindly given for our natural use. Is it sacramental water? I answer without hesitation, No. It is neither natural or ceremonial water, or anything that mortal man can use at his own will. It is that spiritual water which was brought before your minds this afternoon by our brother Davis from Deut. xxxii. 2: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain (water), My speech shall distil as the dew (water), as the small rain (water) upon the tender herb, and as the showers (water) upon the grass." It is that spoken of by God Himself in Isaiah lv. 10, 11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." It is the water Ezekiel saw which conveyed life whithersoever it went (Ezekiel xlvii. 1—9). But we shall see more of this as we go on. Now notice John iii. 8: "The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In the Popish version of the Scriptures this portion reads thus, "*The Spirit breatheth where He will.*" What a glorious declaration of the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost! Look at the two metaphors: Water—the Word. Wind—the Spirit. Water purifying, cleansing, life-giving. Wind renewing, reviving, life-giving. What should we do without this water? Perish. What should we do without this wind? Die. It is a precious fact for the living children of God to dwell upon, that they are regenerated by this spiritual water, the Word, and renewed by this spiritual wind, the Holy Spirit. Look at these persons as they are described in God's Book. By nature, evil; by grace, good. By nature corrupt; by grace, pure. By nature, wicked; by grace, righteous. By nature, deceitful; by grace, without guile. Though by nature they were "strangers," "sinners," "transgressors," "enemies," yet they are taught by grace to confess the glorious truth set before us in the words of the text:

"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits unto His creatures."

II.—THE AUTHOR of their spiritual existence—"He," the Father of lights, named in the preceding verse. The Author of this stupendous work is JEHOVAH Himself. Many portions of God's written Word crowd into my mind, but the time will not allow me to enumerate them. See 1 Peter i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The Father in Christ Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the Author of our spiritual nature, existence, and standing before Him. Mark well the declaration in John i. 12, 13: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power"—*right, or privilege*—"to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." This alludes to the manifestation of their sonship, for, says St. Paul, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Here the Arminian will say, By believing in Jesus we become the sons of God. To this I would reply by asking, Is believing in Jesus the cause, or an effect of life? It must be the one or the other. Is it at all likely that I could believe Him before I was born again? Is not believing an evidence of spiritual life Divinely communicated? The Holy Ghost leaves us not in doubt or darkness here. Read the 13th verse: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Look at it, think upon it, ponder over it. I have done so scores and hundreds of times—"Which were born, not of blood." Grace does not run in the blood, it is not hereditary. "Nor of the will of the flesh." Spiritual birth does not take place according to the natural desires of spiritual men, neither does it spring from the religious flesh of spiritual men. Abraham knew this to his heart's sorrow. He went before his God with a request that could not be granted. See Gen. xvii. 18: "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" But God had determined to establish His covenant with Isaac. Are there any fathers here to-night with children dead in sin manifesting a spirit hostile to that which God has breathed into you? You have remembered them with cries and groans before the throne of grace. Your prayers have seemed to rebound upon you, and God has appeared not to hearken to you. Do you not remember before God your John, your George, your Tom? I have to remember all mine to Him, and learn afresh each day what that means, "not my will, but Thine be done." Life in Christ Jesus is the sovereign gift of a sovereign God, communicated by His own act, and bestowed to whom He will, when and where He will, and just because He will. But, does such a creed and confidence as this leave me as a cold and icy stoic toward those who are near and dear

to me by the ties of nature? No! Were I possessed with such a spirit, I might set myself down as a reprobate, with that brand upon me described among others in Romans i. 31, "Without natural affection." Every declaration of God's Word, and the experience of the living family, testify fully to the fact that regeneration is "not of the will of man, but of God." JEHOVAH is "the Author and Giver of all good things," and to Him we ascribe all the glory of our salvation, preservation, and regeneration.

Now look with me at that precious portion in 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15, and you will see that God is pleased to employ instruments in the accomplishment of His designs of mercy: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you." O that God would give me more of that spirit. I pray, cry, sigh, and groan for it. I long to be characterised by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. I earnestly desire to deal out His mind and will in His spirit, and not in my own, and what I do ministerially may be done in His faith and fear. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." There are no means for spiritually begetting but the Gospel. Yet Satan has his numerous counterfeits. The Papist boasts in the rites of the Church. The ceremonialist and sacerdotalist looks to the water in the font to be communicated by the hand of a humanly got-up priest; but Paul knew of no means but the Gospel. Peter was thoroughly one with Paul, as we read in his 1st epistle i. 22, 23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." God reveals no other mode of purifying the souls of His people but obedience to His truth through His Spirit. I might multiply passages in proof of this blessed fact, but I forbear. I know of no calling so honoured, and yet so humbling, as to be the instrument in carrying God's glorious Gospel to eternally-loved and elect sinners. Do you think I shall ever forget the dear saint from whose anointed lips the words of eternal life first flowed to my trembling heart? Never. My chastened spirit loves to run back to that spot of covenant blessing, and to the very spots of earth where we enjoyed sweet fellowship and association in the things of God. He never had to do with me but in the solemn and eternal realities of the Gospel. One of this congregation said to me this afternoon, "Which of the Grove Chapel Tracts do you like the best?" Before I could answer, he said, "I like Ann Simm the best." Ah! my dear friends, he little knew what a chord of spiritual sympathy he struck in my breast. When God brought poor Ann from the verge of madness, the medical man said, with an expletive, to her husband, "Keep those parsons away from her

or they *will* drive her mad." The doctor was right. All the parsons about that quarter could only have maddened her with their accursed Do, Do. In the riches of His grace God directed my steps to her house, and by the power of His own truth He set her soul at happy liberty. If any of you have a doubt about her case, and you are journeying in South-West Lancashire, call at her house in Edge-green-lane, Ashton-in-Makerfield, and I will be bound to say you will not rue spending a little time in her company. She is poor in this world's goods, but the possessor of Christ's unsearchable riches. It is blessed, but truly humbling, to know that a poor worm of the earth has been made the means of conveying God's truth to one of His eternally-loved ones.

III.—THE MOTIVE — "*His own will.*" Upon my last visit amongst you I directed your attention to Job xxiii. 13: "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth." There we see a God with a mind and will of His own, and who must work according to that mind and will wherever He thinks proper. James, in our text, leads the minds of those to whom he wrote, up to the will of a sovereign and immutable God. I love to be taken back to covenant decrees and gracious settlements, though the taunt has been thrown at me: "*You go too far back for me.*" No doubt of it. I go too far back for fleshly free-willers and Evangelical temporisers. But it is not a question of *my going back*, for *I am carried back*. If my God, by the grace and teaching of His Spirit, carries me back to covenant settlements and gracious purposes to the council chamber of eternity, as revealed in His written Word to the eye of God-wrought faith, I cannot despise His carrying grace or ignore the truth of His Word. I will ask you to notice JEHOVAH'S will as revealed in the first chapter of that blessed family epistle—the one to the Ephesians. I style it thus because in each chapter the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and His children are set before us in loving association and identification. In contrast to all the other epistles, we see a present Christ all the way through. There is no reference to His coming again, and not a sentence concerning His absence; but Christ in the midst of His redeemed and regenerate brethren—the Father's elect given to Him before the foundation of the world. To all these the Father's will is revealed by the Executor—Christ Himself. The 2nd chapter sets forth the accomplishment or performance of that will. In chap. i. 5, 9, 11, Paul writes of "*the good pleasure of His will*," "*the mystery of His will*," and "*the counsel of His will*." In the sovereign will of a sovereign God, it is determined that He will have a people near to Himself, loved with an everlasting love, elected by sovereign decree, redeemed by precious blood, regenerated by His Spirit's power, and brought into spiritual fellowship with the covenant Three-in-One. These are taught that all the religion worth having

comes first-hand from JEHOVAH Himself, according to the verse preceding our text: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Mark that expression—"from above." You see the same words in John iii. 3—margin: "Except a man be born again, or *from above*, he cannot see," understand, or apprehend the spiritual nature of "the kingdom of God." Nicodemus could not then understand it. Natural religion always begins at the wrong end, as does nearly all the religion of the day—with the creature. Spiritual religion always begins at the right end—with God Himself. True religion is all in God, flows from God, and returns to God in expressions of want, necessity, desire, hope, and adoring gratitude. It always comes down by the grace of the Holy Ghost from the glorified God-Man in the courts of bliss. He, having put away their sin by the sacrifice of Himself, satisfied Divine justice, and honoured His Father's law, now represents His own in the presence of the Father, and holds Himself responsible for their regeneration, preservation, and the accomplishment of all His Father's will concerning them. Our God cannot go out of Himself for a reason to deal in grace toward any of His creatures. You see this in Isaiah xl. 14: "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" Again in Rom. xi. 34: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" There is a great analogy existing between natural and spiritual things—between natural and spiritual birth. Who among us were consulted as to the circumstances in connection with our natural birth? Were we asked who should be our parents, or what the place of our birth? These may appear foolish questions to some of you, yet the spirit of them characterises the fashionable religion of this generation. I love that precious verse we sing sometimes at the Grove:—

" His decree who form'd the earth,
Fix'd my first and second birth;
Parents, native place, and time,
All appointed were by Him."

As we had nothing whatever to do with our natural birth, so we had no hand in our spiritual birth. We were spiritually begotten, quickened, and born again by the sovereign power and grace of God. The Divine Three are One in this glorious work. The Father hath quickened us together with Christ (Eph. ii. 5); and, "as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John v. 21). "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John vi. 63.) Again, "Born of God" (John i. 13); born by the Word (1 Peter i. 23); born of the Spirit (John iii. 6). The new birth is wholly by the sovereign will and power of our gracious covenant God.

IV.—THE MEANS—"The Word of truth." I love that title. I am conscious of the fact that Protestants, so-called, may rave at Papists because of sacramentalism and sacerdotalism, while they themselves are utterly ignorant of God's means of bringing His loved ones from death unto life. They read the Book, but where is the God of the Book? They are well acquainted with the written Word, but know not the Living Word. What or who is this Word? It is not a compilation of letters, words, chapters, or books into a volume; but a gracious, glorious, living Person. It is the eternal Word of JEHOVAH revealed in the pages of Holy Writ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost to the hearts of His elect. In Haggai ii. 5, He appears as the Word in covenant. In Psalm xxxiii. 6, as the Word in creation. In Genesis xv. 1, as the Word in communication. The Word of the LORD came to Abraham and spoke to him. In after days the Word declared, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). When He appears, the clouds and vapours of spiritual night are chased away, and it is day indeed—one of the days of the Son of Man.

"In darkest shades if He appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's bright Morning Star,
And He my Rising Sun."

In John i. 14 we are told "the Word was made flesh." Turn with me to Hebrews iv. 12: "For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We cannot stop short with the words of the book, but behold the Word revealed in the book—not words in so much type; but the blessed, living, live-giving Word who is shown to, and in the heart by the Spirit. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight." Whose sight? That of the covenanting, creating, and communicating Word without whom there is no communion with the Father and the Holy Ghost. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is with God's Christ, the living Word, that we have to do in all our approaches unto the Father. "Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." This High Priest is the Word who was made flesh, who communicates the mind of the Father to His people, and makes intercession for them to the Father. He it is who speaks the Father's mind in the hearts of His elect brethren, who opens His mouth for the dumb, and maintains the cause of all those who are spiritually and feelingly condemned and appointed to destruction.

Now He tells us that "The seed is the Word of God"

(Luke viii. 11). See how the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in Gal. iii. 16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." This is the seed by which God brings His elect and redeemed ones into association and fellowship with Himself. The Word of the Father, which is the incorruptible seed, is communicated by the Spirit of the Father. The Christ of God is revealed. The Corn of Wheat fell into the ground (John xii. 24), died, rose again in resurrection power, and ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for His people, and bring to a successful issue every spiritual thing they are concerned in. "Of His own will begat He us *with the Word of truth*." Mark that being "*born of water*" in John iii. 5. That is the Word of the living God—the incarnate Word revealed in the Gospel of the grace of God. How do we know that? Turn to John xv. 3: "Now ye are clean *through the word* which I have spoken unto you." Now read John xvii. 17: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is Truth." In these and other Scriptures we see that God's only means of bringing His people into a spiritual existence, cleansing them from the filth of error and evil, and sanctifying them to Himself, is His Word—His Truth. No other means are acknowledged in His blessed Book.

V.—THE DESIGN—"That we should be a kind 'of firstfruits of His creatures." Does this design of JEHOVAH always appear? Does it? I answer with hesitancy and shame, No. What are the firstfruits? The primeest, finest, ripest, and best looking of the harvest. So God's regenerated people are those whom He sets forth as the excellent of the earth, His choice ones picked out from the rest, and consecrated to Himself as were the firstfruits under the law. Friends in Christ Jesus, beloved brethren and sisters in Him, do we appear to be such in our walk and conversation? You may rest assured that it would not require much at this moment to bring the moisture to my eyes because of what I know of myself. Selfish in my nature, and I find selfishness in almost everything I do. Self-laudation, self-assertion, self-pleasing, or self-pity, which is the most contemptible of the whole, but little self-loathing. O to have His mind who pleased not Himself. When brought by His Spirit into the enjoyment of His sweet company, I can bow to do the most menial service for those for whom my Lord suffered so much and shed His precious blood. "He made Himself of no reputation—He humbled Himself" (Phil. ii. 7, 8). Do we find much of that spirit? I do not ask you to look round at your friends, at those in Church fellowship with you: but look at home. As I look inward I am compelled to bow my head in shame, and cry, O Lord, pardon Thy servant, forgive my iniquities, pity my infirmities, and bring me more and more into spiritual and experimental conformity to the image of that

blessed One who has done, and is doing, so much for me, and has promised to perfect me in every good word and work.

May it be your lot and mine to be led by the blessed Spirit into the deep couching beneath the letter of the written Word. May He cause us to read our title clear to that inheritance which He has given to us in Himself, and reserved in heaven for us. Well, blessed be His name, as sure as He has loved, elected, redeemed, and regenerated us, we shall enjoy it in yonder unclouded glory, where we shall see Him as He is, and praise Him as we ought.

HYMN.

Sons of peace, redeemed by blood,
Raise your songs to Zion's God ;
Made from condemnation free,
Grace triumphant sing with me.

Calvary's summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of grace ;
Count the purple drops and say,
Thus my sins were borne away.

Now no more His wrath we dread,
He hath thus to Zion said,
" Since thy Surety paid thy score,
I behold thy sins no more."

Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in a Saviour's blood ;
Zion, O ! how blest art thou !—
Justified from all things now.

Here we see the curse removed,
Sin condemned, and sinners loved ;
Oh, how sweet to feel the same,
Passing tribulation's flame !

Will our God this peace reveal,
When our heart and flesh shall fail ?
Then we'll sing in Jordan's flood,
Sweet's the peace that's sealed by blood.

JOHN KENT.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
JULY 4TH, 1875, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat Eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.”—Leviticus xvi. 14.

OUR God is very gracious in leading His children to see and understand the different books of Holy Scripture in His own light. The Psalmist rested in this precious fact and was privileged to look his heavenly Teacher in the face and say, “With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa. xxxvi. 9). I love to look at the writings of Moses as a glorious whole—not as five different books, but as one book in five. Each part has its own tale to tell, its own precious truth to unfold.

GENESIS displays the *sovereignty* of JEHOVAH in the ELECTION of a people to Himself.

EXODUS reveals the *power* of JEHOVAH in the REDEMPTION of the people He has sovereignly elected.

LEVITICUS unfolds the *grace* of JEHOVAH in providing SPIRITUAL WORSHIP for His elect and redeemed ones.

NUMBERS brings to light the *patience* of JEHOVAH with His elect, redeemed, worshipping, WARRING, AND WANDERING PEOPLE.

DEUTERONOMY sets forth the *faithfulness* of JEHOVAH in the perfect training and education of His FORGETFUL CHILDREN.

It is our lot at this time to dwell upon the spiritual privileges which God has ensured to His elect, blood-bought, and worshipping people. All that comes down from Him in the channel of sovereign, eternal, and personal election must return to Him in spiritual worship and service from adoring hearts.

As we behold in ancient Israel the type of God's dealings with His spiritual Israel throughout all time, we delight to contemplate His grace as revealed to us in Christ Jesus.

The chapter reveals to us the way to communion and familiarity with God through death and resurrection. In the goat of the LORD'S lot we see every question of sin settled. In the scapegoat we see sin for ever put away. In fact, we see in every point and particular a precious Christ. In the offering of the bullock we see full atonement made for the whole Israel of God, and on this ground the high priest with incense beaten small entered into the holy of holies to commune with Him. Thus, by faith, we see the Lord Jesus Christ and all His elect brethren entering into communion and fellowship with the Father. It is our glory and delight to know that when our Great High Priest shouted in triumph, "IT IS FINISHED," all the sins of God's elect—past, present, and to come—were for ever put away. Then hell's dark legions were confounded, the dispensation of types and shadows closed, and life and immortality were brought to light. The law was magnified and honoured, every precept was fulfilled, every demand met and answered, every question of sin settled, and every curse removed from "the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23). In the presence of the Father He now stands, and has sent His Spirit to apply His precious blood to the souls of His people. This we see in that precious type revealed in the words, "*and sprinkle it with his finger.*" What does the priest's finger signify? It means either something or nothing. But in God's blessed Word we cannot find a superfluous metaphor, type, or word. I believe the finger of the priest typifies the Spirit of Christ. But where do we find this? If you turn to Psa. viii. 3, you will read, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers." Now read Job xxvi. 13: "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." Thus you see that God's fingers and God's Spirit are one and the same. When the Pharisees charged our Lord with casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, according to Luke xi. 20, He said, "But if I with *the finger of God* cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you." But Matt. xii. 28 records the words thus: "But if I cast out devils by *the Spirit of God*, the kingdom of God is come unto you." Here we see again that God's finger is a type of His Spirit. And here let me ask you, What will cast out and silence devils but the application of atoning blood by the Holy Ghost? You know, as well as I, that nothing else will. Dear old John Newton knew this when he sang so sweetly,—

"Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat,
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there."

We see the mercy-seat sprinkled *once*. That meets all the claims of JEHOVAH'S perfections. But the blood-redeemed sinner before the mercy-seat is sprinkled *seven times*. Do notice the position—*Eastward*. In the light of the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings (Mal. iv. 2).

Here I wish you to notice the number seven. In it we see the perfection of salvation in the hands of our great King-Priest. Whatsoever He doeth shall be for ever (Eccles. iii. 14). Salvation in His hands is perfect and complete. Satan may endeavour to mar, and man may foolishly strive to improve it; but beauty and perfection are found in all their glory there. With the utmost stretch of our weak, beclouded minds we cannot fully apprehend this; but when we shall see our Lord at home, we shall know as we are known, we shall see Him as He is, we shall praise Him as we ought. Perfection is God's. Imperfection is ours. The God-Man took our imperfections. He gives us His perfections. In the Jewish high priest sprinkling the blood of the bullock before the mercy-seat seven times the Holy Ghost is pleased to reveal the perfection of Christ's work of salvation, and the perfection of the sanctified in Him (Heb. ix. 1—14). Seven is the Scriptural number denoting abundance, diversity, and perfection, and the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood of Christ speaks of the perfection and completeness of the Church of God in Him. Elect angels desire to understand this marvellous mystery of redeeming love, and in acknowledgment of their ignorance and short-sightedness bow their heads and worship. Oh, how precious are the sweet whispers of the Spirit of Christ: "Perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28); "Accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6); "Complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10).

In the New Testament Scriptures seven blessings are seen flowing to elect souls through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Blessed Spirit! Graciously reveal to us their preciousness and power.

I.—REDEMPTION—"In whom we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. i. 7).

II.—JUSTIFICATION—"Being now justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9).

III.—CLEANSING—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7).

IV.—NEARNESS—"Made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

V.—PEACE—"Having made peace by the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20).

VI.—SANCTIFICATION—"That He might sanctify the people with His own blood" (Heb. xiii. 12).

VII.—VICTORY—"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. xii. 11).

I.—REDEMPTION—"In whom we have redemption through His blood." By Adam's transgression the whole human family became the bondslaves of sin and Satan. The declaration of Paul is painfully true in the experience of every regenerate sinner, "Sin hath reigned unto death" (Rom. v. 21). Until Zion's Redeemer takes possession of our hearts in regeneration, and blesses us with the knowledge of our oneness with Him in His resurrection-glories, spiritual death holds us fast in its iron grasp, sin is our nature and delight, and, if we were dealt with according to our deserts, damnation would be our lot. But, as we are quickened into spiritual life, and hasten to be loosed from the chains of sin and condemnation, the sorrowful complaint ascending from our exercised hearts is, "Sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14). Redemption and deliverance from this awful state by human, natural, or religious means is an utter impossibility. Riches cannot obtain it, and to those who think so, Elihu's question may be proposed, "Will He esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength" (Job xxxvi. 19). Any sacrifice that man can make will never affect his case before the sovereign Proprietor of the universe. What sacrifice can I make to Him when the beasts of the forest are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? (Psa. l. 10). Lebanon with all its mighty cedars cannot yield fuel for such an offering as infinite justice requires (Isa. xl. 16). Let me labour with all my might, and spend my time unceasingly to work out my release, and I shall find that all my endeavours are but sin, and *sin can never atone for sin*. To souls thus taught the precious truth is revealed that God has found a ransom. From the ages of eternity the redemption-price of the Church was settled. Elect vessels of mercy are all of one fixed value. He who stains the pride of the creature's glory taught Israel of old this humbling lesson: "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for their souls" (Exod. xxx. 15). It is our blessed privilege to know that the dark shadows of the old dispensation have fled away before the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Half shekels, gold, and silver have no place in JEHOVAH'S message of redeeming love to mourning, captive souls.

"Great was the price to justice due,
When Jesus would redeem His bride;
Nothing but precious blood would do,
And that must flow from His own side."

The Holy Ghost by Peter makes a clean sweep of all carnal, fleshly considerations when he says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF

CHRIST, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter i. 18, 19). The blood of the everlasting covenant is the one and only price for the redemption of the members of the one body. "Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by HIS OWN BLOOD, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. ix. 12). Oh, what a glorious, perfect, precious, and perpetual redemption! It is from "the curse of the law" (Gal. iii. 13); "from all iniquity" (Titus ii. 14); from a fleshly religion (1 Peter i. 18, 19); out of all troubles (Psa. xxv. 22); from deceit and violence (Psa. lxxii. 14); from death (Hosea xiii. 14); from the grave (Psa. xlix. 15); from the hand of the enemy (Psa. cvii. 2); from all evil (Gen. xlviii. 16). Oh, what a glorious time we shall have of it, when time shall be no longer, and we shall see our blessed Redeemer at home, then, freed from the burden of the flesh, the temptations of the world, and the assaults of the devil, we shall cast our crowns at His sacred feet, and the song of eternal jubilee bursts from our enraptured hearts, "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. v. 6).

II.—JUSTIFICATION—"Being now justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9). Eternal redemption, particular and personal, is a glorious fact which must be revealed by the Holy Ghost to every jewel of electing love. Am I one of those jewels? He knows, and, blessed be His name, He sometimes makes me know also. Redeemed by my Kinsman—from sin, Satan, and self, I desire to praise and adore Him at every step of my homeward journey. But base accusers oft appear to mar the enjoyment of my peace, and chase away the little hope I have of one day seeing Him whom my soul truly loves. This is the sorrowful confession of every brand plucked from the burning fire. Satan the adversary, a troubled conscience, a deceitful heart, indwelling sin, and a naughty world sorely perplex and annoy the true-born child of God. Sometimes he strives to pray—he knows not how. He attempts to make supplication to his Judge—his mouth is stopped and not one of a thousand charges can he answer. But in such a plight he cannot be left. His faithful Friend, who promised never to leave or forsake him, is sure to appear to plead his cause and to maintain his right. He appears and points to the wounds which justice inflicted, and from which streams of justifying grace flow in rich abundance. He fully proves the truth of that glorious Scripture, "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for

I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jer. l. 20). Blessed with the sweet enjoyment of this glorious fact, the justified one embraces Him in the arms of his faith and hope, while the confession ascends before the throne of grace, "My best doings merit Thy displeasure; but in love Thou hast descended to endure my doom and my damnation. Precious Saviour, Thou hast borne the penalty due to my transgressions. Thou hast felt all my pangs, borne my condemnation. Thou art my righteousness. Thou art my justification." The blessed Redeemer as the Righteous-Justifier of His people is blessedly revealed in Zech. iii. 1—5. An elect one stands before the Lord, and Satan is at his right hand to resist and accuse him, and bring about his condemnation; but the Angel of the Lord meets and silences the adversary with declarations of the Father's electing love, and His own redeeming grace. "The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" He commands the filthy garments of the chosen and redeemed one to be taken away, and His own pure white raiment of everlasting righteousness to be put upon him, and said, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Oh, what wondrous, matchless grace! In Him who became "obedient unto death" the whole Israel of God stands everlastingly justified (Isa. xlv. 25). When the faith of His own giving beholds Him as He appears in the presence of God for His elect and redeemed ones, Satan is vanquished, sin is put away, every accuser is silenced, and peace with God is sweetly enjoyed. He pleads, not for any extenuation of the demands of eternal and inexorable justice, nor for any softening down of our offences, but presents Himself on the ground of His perfect obedience and blood-shedding, as our Propitiation and Peace in the eye of His Father and ours. With a heartfelt interest in Him, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, our rejoicing spirits, nestling close to His wounded side, cannot but sing,—

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
E'en this shall then be all my plea:
'JESUS HAS LIVED AND DIED FOR ME.'"

III.—CLEANSING—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). While travelling as strangers and pilgrims in this sin-blighted world, the redeemed and justified people of God are sure to contract and experience the pollution of sin in their daily walk. Sometimes in their

short-sightedness they resort to human efforts and religious appliances, but all will prove futile and vain. Speaking to Israel of old, JEHOVAH put His veto upon all these: "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take with thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me" (Jer. ii. 22). Job knew this by experience, and confessed, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job ix. 30, 31). Ceremonial washings and sacramental ablutions remove not one stain of sin, for sin lies deeper than the skin (Heb. ix. 13, 14). The most profound understanding of Divine mysteries can never secure exemption from its plague and power. The closest devotedness to JEHOVAH'S service, with the strictest watchfulness and most fervent prayer, gives no proof against it. The cloudless light of our covenant Father's perfections, as revealed in the Son of His love, brings to the surface the hidden depths of depravity and corruption lurking in those who can say with confidence, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." You may see this in the precious text, a portion of which is quoted with this heading (1 John i. 7), "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Oh, I do love that present tense expression of JEHOVAH'S constant and perpetual work of clearing His people from their sins, "CLEANSETH." That makes it true for me to-day, to-morrow, and as long as I am in the flesh, and have sin to confess. For mark! "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 8, 9). Blessed be His name for ever for teaching me the hateful nature of sin, and for causing my sin-oppressed soul to cry,

"Jesus, my Saviour and my God,
Fountain for guilt and sin,
Sprinkle me ever with Thy blood,
And cleanse and keep me clean.

Wash me, and make me thus Thine own;
Wash me, and mine Thou art;
Wash me, but not my feet alone;
My hands, my head, my heart."

With hearts warmed with Divine love, and tuned with Divine praise, the redeemed, justified, and cleansed worshippers in the spiritual temple can sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. i. 5, 6). It is most precious to be blessed with a heart-melting interest in the redeeming, justifying, all-cleansing blood of the Lamb, and we

rejoice in the warming and cheering testimony concerning the glorified throng up yonder: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. vii. 14, 15).

IV.—NEARNESS—"Made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13). Ever since the day when Adam took his wilful departure from his God, all his posterity have been aliens, outcasts, strangers, and wanderers from God. Their state is truly described in the words, "*Gone away altogether from God.*" Paul portrays the true character of God's elect by nature thus: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). Such is the state and condition of all God's people naturally. When quickened into spiritual life, they find themselves lost in nature's barren wilds, wandering in the mazes of sin, and dead to every spiritual and heaven-born influence. Sin, ignorance, enmity, and death block up the way between God and their souls; but in the atoning work of Jesus, and by the sprinkling of His precious blood upon the conscience, every intervening obstacle is removed, and the redeemed, justified, and cleansed sinner is carried into the presence of a loving Father, with whom he finds a hearty and eternal welcome. That is a sweet Scripture found in 1 Peter iii. 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The atonement of Christ would be but a farce if one for whom He shed His precious blood should be wanting in the presence of the Father. Christ will have His own at home with Him in glory. Everything which seemed to hinder the outflowings of Divine love sinks into utter nothingness before the all-atoning efficacy of *the blood of sprinkling*. Into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us, our Great High Priest has entered, and He cannot be there without us. In Him His eternally-loved members stand cleared from every charge brought against them by Satan, law, conscience, or the world. They are washed from every stain. They are presented before the throne holy in the Father's election, unblameable in the Son's salvation, and unreprieveable by the Spirit's witnessing, sealing, and bedewing. With the sweet enjoyment of an interest in the person, love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus we remain no longer as outer-court worshippers; but, "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil—that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, we draw near in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 19—22). How near?

"So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He."

Here we would call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless our gracious covenant God for all mercies to us. JESUS, by whom we are all redeemed; JESUS, in whom we are justified; JESUS, who has washed us from all our sin, filth, and impurity; JESUS, our heavenly Friend, kindly takes us by the hand, and introduces to the home and heart of the Majesty of heaven. Blessed privilege! "Made nigh." Stupendous honour! "A people near to Him" (Psa. cxlviii. 14). Marvelous identity! "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One" (John xvii. 23). In Him no condemnation, no wrath, no death, no separation (Romans viii. *passim*).

"Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus,
Long ere time its race begun;
To His name eternal praises,
O what wonders Love hath done!
One with Jesus—
By eternal union ONE."

V.—PEACE—"Having made peace by the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20). Though blessed with abundant, multiplied, and magnified mercy, the people of God mourn daily over the rebelliousness of their nature and the enmity of their carnal mind, and their Father, in wondrous grace, meets them in all their weakness and want, revealing Himself to them as *the very God of peace*. Their state by nature is graphically described in the words of dear old John Kent:—

"At peace with hell, with God at war,
In hell's dark maze they wandered far;
Indulge their lust, and still go on,
As far from God as sheep can run."

This was my case, and I must have wandered down to hell in sin and enmity but for the preventing and constraining grace of my covenant God. When I consider the hellish rebelliousness of my nature, I am astonished to think that He did not, in justice, strike my soul to hell. When I contemplate the riches of His grace, His covenant of grace, and the blood-shedding by my Surety, I know He is the God of peace to me. His wrath which was kindled against my sins was quelled by the sufferings and blood of my precious Saviour.

"That wrath would have kindled a hell
Of never-abating despair,
In millions of creatures, which fell
On Jesus, and spent itself there."

"It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11). Blessed and precious truth. The operation of JEHOVAH'S righteous law in the heart reveals the deep-seated enmity of our nature against Him, rouses its opposition, and

brings about a storm of tumultuous passion which nothing but the sprinkling of the blood of atonement can calm. Our legal spirits cling tenaciously to something of our own as the ground of our peace before God, while Satan delights to allure us from the quietness of God which is found alone in Christ. Thus deceived, we are filled with dissatisfaction and discontent, until the blood of the everlasting covenant is seen, known, apprehended, and felt by the witness of the blessed Spirit. Then, everything of our own departs, sin is sunk into oblivion, and all the accusations of Satan are hushed into the silence of Heaven's unbroken peace.

When JEHOVAH'S judgments cast desolation, destruction, and dismay throughout all the families of Egypt, the blood of the paschal lamb was Israel's peace and security. So now, when God sees the blood of sprinkling upon the hearts of His people, His thoughts are thoughts of peace and not of evil; while the consciousness of this draws from my adoring heart the spirit of the words of the Psalmist, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psa. cxxxix. 17, 18). When the work of salvation was finished by Christ upon Calvary's tree, justice was satisfied, the law was magnified, sin was put away, God was glorified, and elect sinners reconciled to Him. In prophetic vision Micah saw this, when he declared, "And this Man shall be the peace when the Assyrian is in the land" (Micah v. 5). By His sin-atonement death He "made an end of sin, reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24). This clearing away of guilt and condemnation, and establishing His people as righteous in His own righteousness, ever remains a glorious reality, unchanging and unchangeable as JEHOVAH'S throne. Our frames, feelings, and experiences vary and fluctuate, but the blood of the Lamb in midst of the throne remains ever the same, and He who shed it is our unbroken peace in the presence of His and our Father. His own good Spirit sweetly testifying to its efficacy and power in our hearts, gives a peace which the world cannot give nor take away, and in the enjoyment of it we bless our gracious Master for His precious words: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27).

VI.—SANCTIFICATION—"That He might sanctify the people with His own blood" (Heb. xiii. 12). Peace with God means war with Satan, sin, and self. The glorious fact that every new covenant blessing is eternally ours because the Father has chosen us in the Son of His love, and the Son has redeemed us by His most precious blood, leads not our souls to sin and carelessness. Blood has a powerful voice, which calls elect and

redeemed sinners from sin's delights and the world's enjoyments. The more I know of my Redeemer's love, the more I feel my separation to Himself. The sprinkling of the blood of the everlasting covenant upon my conscience is by a sanctifying (separating) hand. He who cleanseth His people from all sin by His own most precious blood will see to it that I am sanctified, consecrated, separated by the same blood to His service. In Lev. viii. 22—24 the consecration of the priests to the service of the tabernacle is minutely described by the Holy Ghost. The tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot, were touched and sanctified with blood. This indicated that the *wills, works, and ways* of the priests in service all belonged to God. So now, the blood-washed child of God is honoured as a consecrated priest in the living temple of JEHOVAH (1 Peter ii. 5; Rev. i. 5, 6). Spiritual sacrifices he offers daily, and is blessed with sweet acceptance through the blood of the Lamb (Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15, 16). His *ear* is charmed with the sweet song of redeeming love, his *hand* is employed in ministering to the necessities of the saints, while his *feet* love to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. xiv. 4). When the soul of Paul was absorbed in the contemplation of the separating power of the blood of Christ, he reminded the saints of God at Corinth of their sanctification in Christ Jesus in the words: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are His" (1 Cor. vi. 20). Oh! my dear friends, if asked, Where is your home? your answer is,—

"I have a home above,
From sin and sorrow free,
A mansion which eternal love
Design'd and form'd for me."

Brought to this experience by the blessed Spirit, we meet with foes on every hand—the world with its allurements, the flesh with its sinful affections and lusts, and Satan with his incessant assaults. How shall we triumph over such fearful odds? See!

VII.—VICTORY—"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. xii. 11). The blood of Jesus, which is my redemption-price from the power of hell and the guilt of sin, is also my security against all their wiles. Every step the redeemed one takes in the walk of faith is contested by hell's dark legions. Is he blessed with peace in the heavenlies? Wicked spirits will oftentimes annoy him (Eph. ii. 6, vi. 12). Weary and faint, the soldier of Christ casts his wistful eyes toward the everlasting hills from whence comes all his help, and anxiously waits for the appearing of Captain and Commander. Hellish hordes, troops of fleshly lusts, combined with the world's dark frowning phalanx, appear in dread array. I fear I shall one day fall by the hand of my spiritual enemy; but as long as the battle is the

Lord's, victory is certain. The Captain of our salvation took upon Him flesh and blood, and in Satan's own territory defeated all the designs of hell against the Church. Does the enemy come in like a flood? The Spirit of the Lord lifts up the standard of redeeming love in the soul, and puts him to flight (Isaiah lix. 19).

O precious blood! O sin-atoning death! "Victory, victory through the blood of the Lamb," is the veteran soldier's cry. For such the Tree of life for ever blooms, and in the paradise of God its fruit shall yield unmingled pleasure. To him the Hidden Manna shall be sweet, and the fair white stone with Christ's new name of LOVE inscribed upon it shall be held in everlasting possession. In union with his conquering Lord, the spiritual warrior shall rule the nations, while heaven's own Light shall shed on him its bright refulgent rays. In the temple of his God, a pillar fair he shall for ever stand. He shall go no more out, but walk with Christ in white, and sit upon His throne, while fruits immortal feast his ravished soul.

"See! the conquerors bring their palms
To the Lamb amidst the throne,
And proclaim in joyful psalms,
Victory through His blood alone."

In Old Testament type we have salvation by blood set forth in striking characters; in New Testament truth the Holy Ghost opens up its sevenfold glory and virtue; in heaven's high court our Great High Priest for ever pleads, and by His Spirit He sprinkles our hearts with His rich atoning blood. Brought into fellowship with Him, we glory in its preciousness and power. We also see that in JEHOVAH'S plan of redemption by the blood of His Son, He has made full provision for all our necessities. Nothing can we want, nothing can we have, but which as His blood-bought children, we enjoy in Him. By the blood of the Lamb the whole of God's elect are redeemed, justified, cleansed, brought nigh, reconciled, sanctified, and victorious.

May the blessed Spirit teach us more and more of JEHOVAH'S declaration to His Israel,

"WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER YOU" (Ex. xii. 13).

HEBREWS XII. 24.

THE sprinkled blood is speaking
Forgiveness full and free,
Its wondrous power is breaking
Each bond of guilt for me.
The sprinkled blood's revealing
A Father's smiling face,
While Jesus' love is sealing
Each monument of grace.

ANON.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

JEHOVAH'S INTEREST IN HIS FEARING AND FEEBLE FOLK.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
DECEMBER 28TH, 1879, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.

"And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."—Malachi iii. 16, 17.

IN humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, we will endeavour to seek for instruction, comfort, and encouragement in this very blessed and precious portion of God's most Holy Word. In it there is much treasured up for the spiritual benefit of the children of God, the strengthening of their feeble faith, and the confirmation of their hope, when opened up and communicated to the heart by the gracious power and indwelling of the Witness and Remembrancer of the everlasting covenant. By His help we will consider,

I.—THE TIME ALLUDED TO—"Then."

II.—THE GOD THAT WAS FEARED—"The LORD."

III.—HIS PEOPLE AND THEIR PRIVILEGES—"They that feared the LORD," &c.

I.—THE TIME—"Then." As we contemplate the time from the first word of the text, "*Then*," and consider the privileges we enjoy, we shall find a wide field for profitable reflection, self-examination, and deep searching of heart by the hand of Him with whom we have to do. We have every reason to be thankful to God for the times upon which our lot has fallen, and to live lives of unceasing gratitude for the immunity from fiery persecution we so graciously enjoy from His kind and loving hands. We shall do well to consider our martyred forefathers, those mighty men

Word of the LORD?" Just imagine, for a moment or two, a poor speck in creation like myself, coming into this pulpit to speak concerning that great and glorious One who is omniscient and omnipresent, who perfectly understands all things in connection with every creature that moves in infinite space, every circumstance attending that creature, and every influence connected with every circumstance. He knows the why and the wherefore of every pain of the body and every sorrow of the mind. All the thoughts, purposes, and desires of men lie open to His omniscient view. Think for a moment of a poor weak mortal, privileged to stand up in His faith and fear to declare the great JEHOVAH'S mind and will, pressed oftentimes with the weight of the glory of rich and sovereign grace, and conscious of his own insufficiency, fearing, and trembling, and filled with self-despair. Then, mark well this fact, the message he declares is opposed by the natural mind of every individual under the sun. Every one of the sons and daughters of Adam possess a mind which is *enmity against God*, not at enmity with God; but the natural mind is wholly *enmity against Him*. See! A child is born into the world, and the parents look upon its face with fond affection. Their love is centred in the child, it is part of themselves. But look at that little one in the light of Divine revelation. It is an enemy to God, possessing a mind wholly at variance with, and antagonistic to, Him, and if He, in the riches of His grace, gives not that child another mind, a new heart, and a right spirit, mark you, with all the training you can give it, all your anxiety concerning it, all the pains you take with it, and all the prayers you teach it to repeat, it is still an enemy of God. It may attend church or chapel, and manifest attachment to a faithful minister, but unless the mind, will, and good pleasure of our covenant God in Christ be wrought in it, the child is an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. It may love you with all the fondness of natural affection, but if love to a covenant God in Christ be manifested by you, the child will love you none the more because of that. Some may say, "Talk about your own children, but we do not wish to hurt the feelings of our little ones." Well, my children are no different in His sight to other children, but God knows I do long to see them brought to the feet of a precious Christ to enjoy the smiles of a covenant Father in Him, and the faithful teaching, sweet bedewing, and precious sealing of God the Holy Ghost. To declare God's truth concerning human depravity, incorrigibility, and enmity, is not a pleasant thing for my natural feelings, but it is pleasing in the eyes of Him with whom I have to do, and profitable to the living in Jerusalem. Whether men will hear or forbear, it is mine to declare the mind of Him with whom I hope to spend an eternity of unbroken bliss and blessedness. I would take all those near and dear to me and lay them in the loving bosom of my Lord, but I cannot. I have

to leave this solemn business with Him, and cry, Oh, that these lads and lasses might live before Thee and in Thee! The faithful statement of the true character of Israel's God increased the burden of the Word of LORD to Malachi. Look at it.

"*I have loved you, saith the LORD.*" Our God loves not everybody, but, blessed be His name, He loves somebody, and has given some of us to taste the sweetness of His covenant love. His love is eternal, changeless, inexhaustible, and in this is secured the present salvation and the future glory of all the loved ones, for,

"Whom once He loves He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

Having a desire to the work of His own hands (Job xiv. 15), He will never leave or forsake it, but will carry it safe home to glory. His covenant love is confined to His own elect, His spiritual Israel. But these will sometimes ask Him, "*Wherein hast Thou loved us?*" The Lord answers by asking, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." Look on this picture and on that. God's love! God's hate! Jacob loved. Esau hated. One caressed, the other cursed. Shall I be wrong if I say God loves some of you, and that He does not love some of you? I think I shall not be wrong in saying so. You may depend upon it, that would be a marvellous congregation where none but elect sheep were found. That would be a remarkable gathering in which none but God's elect appeared. It would be an extraordinary assembly where the redeemed of the Lord alone could be seen. Our blessed Lord kept multitudes around Him while He fed them with bread and fish; but the moment He placed spiritual food before them they hurried away from Him. They said, "That is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John vi. 60). What was a hard saying? That of the Saviour's, which proclaimed human inability and Divine sovereignty. "No man can come unto Me except the Father, which hath sent Me, draw him" (John vi. 44, 65). "From that *saying* many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" A devil among so small a number gathered round the person of Christ. Can it be possible that a congregation of a few scores or hundreds can exist and all be loved eternally of God? Scarcely out of heaven. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. ix. 13), is JEHOVAH'S immutable declaration. But look at the character of Malachi's God as revealed in the 4th verse of his first chapter: "Whereas Edom said, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places, thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom

the LORD hath indignation for ever." Oh, my dear friends, where are we? What are we? Who are we? Either, the people for whom the Lord has love for ever, or, "The people against whom He has indignation for ever." Are we loved or hated of God? We are either one or the other. The line of demarcation is clearly and irrevocably defined in God's most Holy Word. The pure white line of sovereign, eternal election is clearly traced from Genesis to Revelation, while the blood red line of redemption defines the bounds of the election of grace. That is a remarkable Scripture in Exodus viii. 23: "And I will put a *redemption* between My people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be." Do you see the separating line? If so, where are you? Elect or reprobate? Redeemed or unredeemed? Regenerate or unregenerate? The line is drawn clearly by loving John, in his first epistle, iii. 10: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Here we may ask ourselves individually, Whose child am I? What God do I worship? The God I worship is He who has a right to do as He will with His own, and who will dispose of His creatures according to His sovereign will and infinite wisdom in spite of all that men or devils may say or do to the contrary. Those whom He has ordained to eternal life He will bring by the power of the Holy Ghost to believe and rest in Him, and to know and feel their eternal oneness with Him. He will bring them in the arms of unfailing love to the footstool of sovereign mercy, there to bless them with His kiss of reconciling affection, and break their hearts with a sweet sense of His covenant love. Where are we to-night? Where am I? and what am I? I am either a fearer and worshipper of this great and glorious God, or I am not. Well, blessed be His name, He knows that this heart beats in love to, and fear of Him in spite of all the infirmities of the flesh, for you may depend upon this, there is not very much superstition in my natural constitution. I should be a poor tool at playing the hypocrite. I know it is a solemn fact that I should not pay any attention to the truths of God if He did not look well after me. Such is the incorrigibility of my wretched nature under which I daily groan, that were it not for God's unceasing care over me, I should not care at all for Him or His truth. But Malachi gives us a glorious account of the character of his God, who is our God. He is sovereign and absolute in His will; uninfluenced in His love; unerring in His wisdom; irresistible in His power; discriminating in His grace. Of Him and to Him we can sing,

"Thou canst discern from all the rest
The people Thou hast bought;
And this ensures that they alone
Shall be Divinely taught."

Our God makes His taught ones like Himself in this matter, as we read in the verse succeeding the text: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked,

between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." Now, then, having noticed the state of Malachi's times and the character of his God, we will proceed to notice—

III.—GOD'S PEOPLE AND THEIR PRIVILEGES—"They that feared the Lord," &c. I love that gracious description of the people of God, and I will tell you why I love it. It just suits my case, because by it God is pleased to come down to the level of the weakest child in faith's family, and to the experience of the feeblest lamb in the flock of Jesus. I love to linger over such blessed waymarks as they are brought to light in the pages of God's ever-blessed Word. Malachi raises no high standard of spiritual experience, though his standard of Divine doctrine is a mighty height. He is marvellously high in doctrine, he is marvellously low in experience. Blessed be God, this is not peculiar to Malachi. It is true in the case of all those who are led by the Spirit into the hidden mysteries of Divine revelation, and who obtain gracious lifts into the heights of covenant favour. Those who are blessed and favoured with the light and joy of the King's presence, are oftentimes let down to the deepest depths of spiritual exercise. At one time they are rejoicing in the sweet experience of sovereign love, while at another they are mourning in the depths of dreary despondency. One moment they are embraced in the arms of everlasting affection, and at another they are buffeted and bruised by the devil. *Now* they enjoy a firm footing upon the Rock of Ages, and shout, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" *Then* they are tossed with tempest and not comforted, and amid the wild waves of doubt, fear, and anxiety, they cry, "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth?" (Psa. lxxxix. 49). Yes, those who are the most highly blessed with the enjoyment of God's favour, are frequently brought, through the temptations of the devil and the plague of their heart, to question their standing before Him. But it is a blessed thing for us to know how He comes down to the depths of our spiritual necessities and infirmities. Notice the gracious description He gives of His own—

"*They that feared the LORD.*" He does not say, "Then they that *believed* the LORD." No. It is not, "Then *believers* spake often one to another." I think I have told you before that when I hear a minister using that word *believers* in his addresses to the people, if I do not shake my head, my confidence is shaken in him. The minister in the pulpit may be speaking to some God-fearing children who cannot lay claim to the faith of God's elect, or to believing in Him to the salvation of their souls. They would if they could, but they know not how. The language of our text is for the feeble folk in God's family, for those who fear Him and have only a hope in His mercy. Mark, *they fear the LORD.* Now this fear is not that craven cowardice which characterises the slave; but it is that filial principle of

loving attachment, devotion, and veneration to a gracious Father which He sees in His loving children. This He calls forth by manifesting to them the love of His heart, the goodness of His house, and the treasures of His covenant. Natural fear is that inbred principle which is apprehensive of danger and avoids it. Wherever spiritual danger lurks or shows its hateful face, from thence spiritual fear in company with heavenly love is sure to flee. But truly there is no real danger to a true-born child of God, for, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31); "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter iii. 13). Christ is that which is good, and who can harm His followers? Yet there is very much in the spiritual apprehension of the child of God that is dangerous to his peace of mind, quietness of conscience, and enjoyment of fellowship with His covenant God and Father in Christ. God's fear and God's love always dwell together in the exercised hearts of His people.

" Fear is a grace which ever dwells
With its fair partner, love;
Blending their beauties, both proclaim
Their source is from above."

Blessed be God's holy name, many of us can say we love and fear God, who hesitate before we boast of faith and confidence. This reminds me of one now in glory who once said to me, "I do love the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is everything in Him to draw out my love to Him; but the question is, *Does He love me?*" There you can see a clear manifestation of love and godly fear. "*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil*" (Prov. viii. 13). He who possesses it hates evil, not from fleshly motives, but because it is hateful to the new nature implanted within him. "*The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death*" (Prov. xiv. 27). It is a well-spring of wisdom, preserving elect and redeemed sinners from deadly and destructive paths, and causing the living child of God to abhor sin and detest everything which stands in opposition to the mind, will, and pleasure of his heavenly Father. The fear of the LORD implanted in the heart is sure to bring the favoured recipient into subjection to the reign of sovereign love, and cause him not to rush rashly into the presence of the Majesty of heaven. It will bring him humbly and with brokenness of spirit to enjoy forgiveness, justification, and acceptance with his God and Friend, while the heart will bow in awe and adoration before Him for favours so Divine. You may see this fear in gracious operation and effect in the case of many whose experience is set forth in the pages of Divine inspiration. If you will turn to Nehemiah v. 15, you will read how the former governors of Israel bare rule by extortion and oppression, but says Nehemiah, "So did not I, because of the fear of God." You see the same in the case of Joseph when fierce temptation

assailed him. The fear of the Lord wrought in him resistance to temptation, abhorrence of sin, and drew from him the chaste confession, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). You see the same in the rebuke of the elect thief to his reprobate companion in crime and suffering, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" (Luke xxiii. 40). This gracious confessor had been mysteriously taught that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," and that the Lord whose fear restrained him from sin, was the dying Saviour by his side. Even the bonds of time shut not out this gracious principle from the glorified throng who bow in awe, adoration, and praise before Him who loved, redeemed, and brought them to share His glory. Read with me Rev. xv. 4: "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest."

"*They that feared the LORD.*" I do love such precious declarations as those we find in Psa. xxxiii. 18: "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." That is a very low evidence of life, yet the covenant care and concern of JEHOVAH are ever over His fearing and feeble folk. The Psalmist in possession of fear and hope could say, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD." Notice the characters he calls to receive his instruction. They are children, babes, little ones, feeble folk. Not those who can boast of the length and strength of their faith, their zeal for the Lord, or their work for Him. I love that precious portion in Psa. cxv. 9—13: "O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: He is their Help and their Shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: He is their Help and their Shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: He is their Help and their Shield. The LORD hath been mindful of us: He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great." I bless the Lord for that last sentence, "*small and great.*" You who can find only a grain of this fear, who fear because the fear of God is so small in you, are here encouraged to put your trust in Him. We will now look at another characteristic of God's people.

They "*spake often one to another.*" What did they speak about? I feel sure they conversed about the great and gracious things God had done for them. This was David's loved employ: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psa. lxvi. 16). "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,

"And that thought upon His name." A God-fearer is not of necessity a fluent talker. You will find them to be poor in spirit, needy in experience, and sorrowful in heart. They love to retire from the public gaze, and unobserved would listen to the voice of the Saviour in the declarations of rich and mighty grace flowing from the exercised hearts of His servants. Are there any such here to-night? I know we have some who love to think upon His name. Some who, if spared unto the coming day, will face the stern realities of business life with all its godless competition, and a terrible strain upon their nerves seeking to be kept honest in the sight of God. O my tried and tempted brethren, then, in weakness you will think upon His name in the exchange, the mart, the office, and the crowded thoroughfare. Ay, and in the silent watches of the night the thought of His name will be most precious.

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

"And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts." Satan will insinuate that they are not the Lord's. The world which knows them not will call into question their high dignity and destiny, but the Father will have His elect children about Him, the Son will present His redeemed brethren to the Father, and the Holy Ghost will witness to the eternal safety and security of all for whom Christ died.

"In that day when I make up My jewels." O what glorious dignity! JEHOVAH'S jewels! They shall shine with untarnished brilliancy in His glorious coronet of grace. Then He will declare where He sought and found each favoured jewel—*"His special treasure"*—polished it in grace and perfected it in eternal glory. *"And I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."* A man will bear with a son where he will not tolerate a servant. So it is with our gracious God. He will bear with His children in their infirmities, ignorances, and inability—He will carry them in His arms and affectionate bosom to His own bright home, to spend an eternity of bliss and blessedness with Him.

May you and I be there to share His glory. Amen.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

THE LORD'S MESSENGER AND MESSAGE.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON THURSDAY AFTER-
NOON, SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1874, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY,

AT THE SERVICE HELD FOR HIS PUBLIC RECOGNITION AS MINISTER
OF THE PLACE.

"Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD."—Haggai i. 13.

THE burden of this prophecy, in the mind of the prophet, was the awakening, directing, and encouraging God's ancient people, who had returned from their captivity and exile, in the work of rebuilding the temple which lay in ruins, and the restoring the true worship of JEHOVAH which had fallen into disuse. The time appointed in the eternal counsels for restoration and reformation had arrived, but many of the people, through *covetousness*, some from *coldness*, others from *cowardice*, and all from *selfishness*, declared the time was not yet come. Yet this did not frustrate the Lord's plan, nor hinder the accomplishment of His purposes of love to His people. As He had purposed, so He would perform; as He had planned, so He would perfect. In His time, Haggai appeared at His bidding to reprove the people for their neglect, incite them to their work, and encourage them with the promise of the Lord's presence and blessing.

It is not my intention this afternoon to dwell upon the historical bearing of the text, but notice that which is spiritual, and in which we, as the people of God, are personally interested. The prominent features of the prophecy are JEHOVAH and His temple. As led by the Spirit, our minds run at once to another temple greater, grander, and more glorious, even God's spiritual temple in which He will be unceasingly worshipped and glorified. Turn with me to Ephesians ii. 20—22: "And are

with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). True Gospel messengers are one with Him in rejection by the world, and in reception by the Father; one with Him in the darkness of desertion, and in the delights of the Father's presence; one with Him in the fellowship of His sufferings and the glory that must follow; one with Him before the worlds were framed, and one with Him when this world shall be no more.

"Hail, sacred union, firm and strong!
How great the grace! how sweet the song!
That rebel worms should ever be
One with Incarnate Deity."

In oneness with Him, the quickened elect are separated from the world. His beauties, bounties, and blessings are so powerful in their attractions as to sever His loved ones from a world which passeth away, and secure them to a world which knows no end. By the pure silver line of God's eternal, personal, and sovereign election, they are distinguished from the reprobate. By the blood-red line of particular and personal redemption, they are marked off from the unredeemed. As this is experienced, they delight to sing:—

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of Thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools, and pomp of kings."

Separated to and by the Gospel of Christ, the redeemed one, who has groaned beneath the weight of his sins and found the load of them intolerable, now rejoices in the sweet sound of pardon flowing from a loving Father's lips. He delights in the companionship of His adorable Saviour and Surety, and in the knowledge that He who was the delight of JEHOVAH came down to endure the bitter anguish, death, and doom so richly deserved by him. Thus taught by the Spirit, he seeks to tell out the sweets of pardoning love, and the riches of redeeming grace to the weary, waiting, and wanting people of God.

Let us look at a few of the Lord's messengers as they are described by Him in His blessed Word. Turn to 1 Kings xvii. 1. Here we see Elijah, who, according to the testimony of Christ, was a sent one (Luke iv. 26). He appears to have dropped down from the skies to give a good account of himself and of his Master: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Elijah owns and acknowledges the Object of his adoration and worship to be—

JEHOVAH—the Self-existent, the Underived.
God—the Centre, Fount, and Sun of all goodness.
Of Israel—the covenant God of a covenant people.

Liveth—the God of all spiritual and eternal life. Where does He live? Christ the Life of His people lives personally *for* them in heaven, and spiritually *in* them here by the gracious power of the Holy Ghost.

Before whom—I have acceptance and confidence.

I stand—the possessors of a Divine commission cannot be borne down or laid aside until their commission is executed. Doubts, fears, fightings, and tremblings many may and will be theirs, while craven fear may cause them to fly like Elijah and Jonah from their post; but all this will tell for the truth, and not against it. God will compel His fearing servants with a gracious compulsion to do His bidding in the face of all opposition that may assail them from earth or hell.

Notice the commission and confirmation of Isaiah as recorded in his sixth chapter. In the temple he was overwhelmed with a sight of the glory, majesty, and sovereignty of Christ, which caused him to speak bitter things against himself. He confessed his undone and unclean state in the presence of infinite purity, and received from the Lord's lips the assurance of sin pardoned and iniquity purged. Immediately he hears the voice of the Lord inquiring, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" to which he answered, "Here am I; send me." Had he known the nature of JEHOVAH'S message, he might not have been so eager to run with it. The message contained a declaration of Divine sovereignty and human depravity so clear and pronounced as to cause the prophet to cry, "Lord, how long?" Listen to the answer of the Lord to His astounded servant: "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the land." Yet with all this the result of the message should be the salvation and preservation of the holy seed—God's own elect—the abiding substance. We shall not find many messengers accepting such a call now-a-days.

Turn to the account Jeremiah gives of his separation, call, and ordination in his first chapter: "Then the Word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." Throughout this account,

we trace the sovereignty of JEHOVAH, the submission of His messenger to His will, and the glory of the message to be delivered. Mark, it was God's message, not the messenger's. The message was discriminating and separating according to the Word of the Lord: "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth" (Jer. xv. 19). Notice the Lord's declaration in chap. xxiii. 28: "He that hath My Word, let Him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" Ah! my dear friends, the testimony of the present day is sickly, pointless, and unmeaning. Not so Jeremiah's.

God's servants are styled messengers because they go forth with His message, His words, and by the anointing, bedewing, and teaching of His Spirit. It is not for them to act in their own way, speak in their own words, or think with their own will. Paul knew this when the Lord Jesus said unto him: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts xxvi. 16—18). As *messengers*, it is our loved employ to carry God's Word to those to whom we are sent; as *ministers*, we delight to attend to the spiritual necessities of the saints; as *stewards*, it is our joy to dispense Divinely-entrusted provision to the household of God; as *labourers*, we hesitate not to toil in the word and doctrine for Zion's sake; as *watchmen*, we are ready to spend and be spent for the weak and weary in the Lord's family; as *guides*, we love to go before the flock at the Master's bidding and lead the lambs and sheep into the fair fields of eternal truth, where they are privileged to feed upon the rich pastures of covenant favour. Those are two precious titles given to God's sent servants in 2 Cor. viii. 23: "The messengers of the Churches and the GLORY OF CHRIST."

II.—THE LORD'S MESSAGE. What is it? It is styled "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark i. 1); "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24); "the Gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1); "the Gospel of His Son" (Rom. i. 9); "the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. i. 16); "the glorious Gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 4); "the Gospel of salvation" (Eph. i. 13); "the Gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15); "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. i. 11); "the everlasting Gospel" (Rev. xiv. 6). But what is the Gospel? It is *God's spell*, or God's announcement of all that He is to His elect and redeemed people in the Son of His love. It is God's proclamation of pardon and peace to His

people through the blood and obedience of Christ. It is God's message of love and grace to His unworthy ones. It is a distinct and definite declaration of sovereign goodness to distinct and definite persons who were fore-ordained to this glorious privilege. Those who are honoured by God to be entrusted with so rich a treasure, have simply to declare, proclaim, or preach it, but have no offers to make, and possess no power to apply it. Paul knew this when he wrote: "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 16). So zealous was he for the honour of the Gospel by the teaching of God's Spirit, that he pronounced an awful curse upon all who should preach any other (Gal. i. 9), to which I give my hearty Amen. God's Gospel is His message of *love* to His elect Church; His message of *grace* to unworthy children; His message of *mercy* to miserable sinners; His message of *pity* to helpless souls; His message of *compassion* to needy pilgrims; His message of *consolation* to mourners in Zion; but His message of *judgment* to the reprobate. The Gospel message is glad tidings of great joy carried from the heart of a covenant God to the hearts of a covenant people by the power of the Holy Ghost, and brings to light the hidden things of grace and glory. Those who are brought under its power are blessed indeed, according to the declaration of the Psalmist: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For Thou art the glory of their strength: and in Thy favour our horn shall be exalted" (Psalm lxxxix. 15—17).

The Gospel is a declaration of the righteousness of God in doing away with the sins of His people by the death of their Surety, and His providing them with a perfect righteousness in His spotless obedience to the law, by which He justifies them, and in which He brings them to stand with acceptance and favour before Him. See how Paul states this in 1 Cor. xv. 1—4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Look at this in connection with Rom. iv. 25: "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." In these two portions you have an epitome of the Gospel. The man who has been taught by the Holy Ghost, and has received it from the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ to declare it to others, is painfully conscious of the universal corruption and total depravity of human nature, and shuns not to declare his convictions. He knows, by Divine teaching, that the imagina-

tion of the thoughts of his heart is *wholly* evil, and *always* evil, his heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and himself shut up to what God is pleased to do for him in the way of mercy or judgment. In all this God makes room for the revelation of Himself as "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE." This could only be in the Son of His love. Here the mystery of the Holy Incarnation is graciously revealed. The eternal Word, the eternal Son, the eternal God identifying Himself with His people in all their states, sins, sufferings, and sorrows. In this oneness of eternal design, He willingly consented to the transfer of all their transgressions, sins, and iniquities to Himself. As the Incarnate God, the God-Man Mediator, the Surety of the everlasting covenant, He rendered a full, complete, and perfect satisfaction to the righteous claims of JEHOVAH'S law in bearing all the suffering due to the sins of His people, putting away and making an end of sin by the sufferings He endured, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness, clothed in which He will present the whole of His redeemed Church with acceptance to the eye and heart of His Father.

"What wondrous love, what mysteries
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

Blessed with an experimental interest in this heaven-sent message, my ransomed spirit loves to join in the rejoicing of the living in Jerusalem, and sing:—

"Dressed in this garment washed in blood,
And ransomed from the powers of hell,
We now free access have to God,
And of His love and goodness tell."

This message from God tells of peace everlastingly secured between the eternally-loved elect, and their eternally-loving God, through the obedience and blood-shedding of the Head and Husband of the Church. Hezekiah knew this when he said, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah xxxviii. 17). What a glorious truth for a pardoned sinner to contemplate! JEHOVAH-GOD, who fills immensity, interposes between elect sinners and offended justice, and stands between them and their sins. This secures to them a salvation perfect as He is perfect—never to be mended, never to be marred. It is an everlasting salvation (Isaiah xlv. 17); a great salvation (Heb. ii. 3); for by it great sinners are saved from great wrath and great sufferings. It is the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Tim. ii. 10). A salvation short of this would be no salvation at all. The salvation and sympathy of Jesus reaches to all the doubts and distresses, fears and failings, of His oft-times mourning bride, who, in conscious weakness,

loves to lean upon Him, her own Beloved. JEHOVAH'S message unfolds the glorious fact that all His attributes are arrayed for, and not against, His Church and people.

"Truth, wisdom, justice, pow'r, and love,
In all their glory shone,
When Jesus left the courts above,
And died to save His own.

Truth, wisdom, justice, pow'r, and love,
Are equally display'd,
Now Jesus reigns enthron'd above.
Our Advocate and Head."

Blessed be His name, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25).

But He leaves not His people with the mere declaration of the message, for by His own power He works precious faith in their hearts, by which they claim His salvation, and hail it as their own. Stripped of their own fancied and fleshly righteousness, they glory in His. Brought to experience spiritual poverty and necessity, they delight in His unsearchable riches, and in the possession of a kingdom which can never be moved. The Gospel of the grace of God reveals a precious Christ for every extremity, every exigency which the tried and tempted people of God encounter during their pilgrimage to their home of love up yonder. God's salvation was begun by Himself in purpose without faltering; He carries it on without failure; He will perfect it in eternal glory without flaw. Now notice the precious declaration in God's message to His people:—

"*I am with you.*" Who is He with? This question and its answer are too discriminating, searching, and separating for some folk. Nevertheless the question is put, and the answer must be given. He is with His own elect. Before all worlds He had them near to Himself as the objects of His love (John xvii. 23), choice (Eph. i. 4), and delight (Prov. viii. 31). He wrote their names in the old family register—the blood-red roll of His elect—the Lamb's book of life. He willed over to them the vast inheritance of grace and glory, and secured them from final falling in a covenant ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). He gave to them exceeding great and precious promises which can never be broken, and an eternal interest in Himself which neither Satan, sin, nor self can ever affect or efface.

"*I am with you.*" That is a glorious announcement in Matt. i. 23: "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"—with His own elect in marvellous condescension and mysterious incarnation. For us elect men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven, and, as a real Man, He sorrowed, suffered, bled, and died to bring us to God and to take us to glory. Promise after promise He gave to His Church that He would ever be in the midst of it to

patient love, and speaks to our fainting hearts: "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

May it be His gracious will to manifest Himself in the testimony flowing from the exercised heart of His messenger in this place, that He alone may be exalted, His Father glorified, His Spirit honoured, and His chosen, redeemed, and regenerate people abundantly satisfied with the goodness of His house.

And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three-in-One and One-in-Three, be equal, undivided, and unceasing glory ascribed. Amen and Amen.

H Y M N.

No news can suit a ruin'd race,
But sov'reign, free, eternal grace:
No other Gospel can impart
Joy, peace, and comfort to the heart.

But those are tidings good indeed
Which tell me Jesus deigned to bleed,
To vanquish Satan, cancel sin,
And bring eternal glory in.

The only Gospel we can own
Sets Jesus Christ upon His throne:
Proclaims salvation full and free,
Obtain'd on Calv'ry's rugged tree.

The Gospel is the news from heav'n,
Of grace bestow'd, and sins forgiv'n:
Redeeming blood—electing love—
Of quick'ning grace—and joys above.

Lord, write this Gospel in my heart,
And in its blessings give me part;
Until I see my Saviour's face,
And sing, "I'm sav'd by Gospel grace."

JOSEPH IRONS.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, NEW ENGLAND ROAD, BRIGHTON,
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 3RD, 1880, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”—Zephaniah iii. 13.

I REMEMBER the time, and believe I shall never forget it, when there might not have been another portion of Divine inspiration for me, than this precious third chapter of Zephaniah. In whatever company I was found I was almost sure to read it, and its truths were enunciated and declared. Reading it so often, whenever I opened my Bible, it would invariably open to this spot. Then the times and seasons of spiritual refreshing were peculiar to that period of my spiritual history. Oftentimes since I have eagerly expected their return, but God has taught me that He has His own seasons of peculiar blessedness for His children. He has particular manifestations of Himself and revelations of His grace for particular times which can never be repeated. I have noticed this in my own experience, and observed it in others. Seasons most precious have been mine in the enjoyment of some of those blessed hymns bequeathed to us by God, and flowing from the rich experience of such men as Hart, Kent, Medley, and Newton. I have sung them while my heart has been melted within me with a sense of His love, and my eyes moistened with tears of God's own giving; yet such is the perversity of my religious nature, that I have run back to the old spot in hope and expectation of the same blessing; but mark! it has been lacking. The same hymn with the same precious truth was there, but the power and savour peculiar to the former season of refreshing were not forthcoming. God has His own way of teaching His children to profit. He makes us feel our ignorance that we may trust to

His wisdom. He brings us to feel our weakness that we may lay hold of His strength. He causes us to know our imperfections that we may glory in His perfections.

At the commencement of the chapter, the Lord by the prophet reproves the Jews for their divers sins. He cries against the flagrant enormities of a very religious city. Her disobedience: "She obeyed not the voice;" her incorrigibility: "she received not correction;" her unbelief: "she trusted not in the LORD;" her indifference, "she drew not near to her God." It is a very easy matter for religious human nature to find in such reproofs as these that which is applicable to the sinful state of others; but the earnest desire of an Israelite indeed is for the Lord to search him, probe him, and bring to view the very worst state of his wretched nature. See Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of pain or grief in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Personal sins are an almost continuous source of grief to the spiritually-taught child of God. My own sins oppress me while I am oftentimes blind to those of my neighbour, companion, or friend. I do know what that means in Psalm xxxvi. 1: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes;" or, according to Cranmer's version of the Psalms, "My heart showeth me the wickedness of the ungodly." But let us proceed to notice the description JEHOVAH gives of the great ones among the Jews in Zephaniah's time. The princes were oppressors, the judges as greedy wolves, the prophets were light and treacherous persons. These professed teachers and guides of the people, instead of being impressed with the solemnity of their office, and burdened with the Word of the Lord, were the very reverse to all this. What an awful picture we have of them! The Holy Ghost portrays them as utterly opposed to JEHOVAH'S mind and will. As we contemplate this true and infallible description of the Jews of old, can we fail to see a faithful description of the parsonic presumers of the present day? No, we cannot. As I look around me and speak from personal experience in the sight of my God, without desiring to take the place of censor, I must declare that Zephaniah describes most accurately the *pandering pastors* of our times. Self-seeking, self-praise, and self-pity are met with on every hand. Look at those words, "Her prophets are light and treacherous persons." Such know nothing of the burden of sin and guilt, and have never trembled before God under a sense of the curse and condemnation of His righteous law. They may dress in silk who never droop in sorrow for sin. Preachers and prelates strut about in linen and lawn who are utterly destitute of the fine linen of the saints of the Most High God. But, look here! the dignified Dissenter may pride himself in being above all this millinery and yet be

amongst the light ones who deal treacherously with God, His truth, and His people. “Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.” This is true of all so-called priests now. Their mongrel mass-houses are polluted with their filthy breath which they style prayer, and with their God-dishonouring effusions which they call preaching. All their statements tend to contradict the sovereignty, power, grace, and truth of JEHOVAH. But I desire not to dwell upon this dark picture. Though disobedience, incorrigibility, infidelity, and indifference reigned in Jerusalem, yet, “The just LORD is in the midst thereof.” Oh, what marvellous mercy and grace is revealed in God’s appearance in such a scene! Notwithstanding all the abounding corruption and depravity, He is discovered in the midst thereof, seeking, finding, and gathering out a people for His name, in whose redemption He will be glorified. “He will not do iniquity.” All His acts are done in equity, judgment, and truth. He saves whom He will, and leaves whom He will, though men call into question His right to take to Himself the profligate and profane and pass by the pietist and self-righteous. “He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.” “*Morning by morning* doth He bring His judgment to light, He faileth not,” though His children oftentimes do. Yet do as He will in judgment or in mercy, “the unjust knoweth no shame.” Now notice the 8th verse: “Therefore wait ye upon Me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.” I like to look at each portion of God’s blessed Word as it bears upon my own personal experience, for not one portion is profitable otherwise. As I am brought into spots of spiritual necessity, and the blessed Spirit seals home the truth to my heart by His rich and sovereign grace, I am enabled to claim it as mine. Here I may ask the question, Is this Scripture true in my experience, “All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy?” Some of you may be led to ask if it be true in yours, and it may be the lot of some of you to find it so. I can say it is true in my experience. By the fire of JEHOVAH’S law He has so wrought in me that I find everything out of Christ to be but vanity and vexation of spirit. It is mine to sigh and sometimes sing in the minor mode, but with the spirit and understanding also,—

“Change and decay in all around I see:
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

He has taught me that my resting place is not to be found in any nook in this death-doomed land. In every feathered nest He plants a thorn. In every gracious lot I find a crook. Accompanying every visitation of love I am sure

to meet the messenger of Satan to buffet me. Every blessing I enjoy apart from experimental oneness with Him will prove a source of bitterness to me. If God has taught you and blessed you with the sweet enjoyment of His love, He will prove to you that He is a jealous God and will not accept or acknowledge a divided heart. From your fleshly lovers He will woo you, from your earthly idols He will cleanse you, your high looks He will bring down, and will stain all the pride of your worldly glory. It matters not from what source pride springs, or what object it fixes upon—earthly, sensual, or devilish; religious or irreligious, experimental or practical—God will bring it down. There is doctrinal pride, experimental pride, and practical pride, but whatever form it assumes, and if our heart is fixed upon anything short of God Himself, He will make short work with it. If He has taught you by His law the true nature of sin against Him, if sin is a burden to you, and the sentence of death is found within you, if hell and damnation have been made terrible realities in your heart's experience, what is the world with all its beauties to you? A wilderness and a waste. We live in a day of religious profusion. At the corner of almost every street religion stares you in the face, and so-called places of worship abound; but who is worshipped in them? What is taught? What is the result of the teaching? Opposition to God's truth, and enmity against the great and glorious JEHOVAH. We can find an abundance of that teaching which leads people to live loosely to a sovereign God, and think lightly of the truths of Divine revelation; but when the thunders of the law break upon the Spirit-taught ear and reach the quickened, quivering spirit, when the curse and condemnation of the law are solemn realities in the soul, then earthly hopes are blighted, worldly expectations are blasted, creature comforts are held with a loose hand, and fleshly comforts and enjoyments have lost their charms. When the earth is thus devoured with the fire of JEHOVAH'S jealousy, He says, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent." These go not before the Lord with the sacrifice of fools, nor present to Him the strange fire of fleshly free-will. They cry not, "Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," while their spirits are light and flippant. No! Their humble confession before Him is the pure outflow of an experience of His own creating. They cannot tell Him how good, faithful, believing, and loving they are: but with burdened spirits and broken hearts they cry, "For Thy name's sake, O LORD." Glorious plea! "Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Not because it is small or light; but because it is great and heavy. They own and acknowledge that salvation is free, full, and eternal through the electing decree of the Father, the redeeming blood of the Son, and the regenerating power of the

Holy Ghost. Then, in the 10th verse, we see Him bringing His own from all quarters of the earth, who present His offering before Him. Look at the 11th verse: “In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against Me.” Can that be true in your experience? It has been in mine, when revelling in the glorious revelations God has made of Himself to me, as a sin-hating, sin-forgiving, and sinner-accepting God. When He has said to me, “Son, thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee,” in the sweet experience of pardon, justification, and acceptance of my person in Christ Jesus; when my heart is warmed with the shedding abroad of Divine love in it by the Holy Ghost, when the fogs and mists of unbelief are chased away from my understanding by Divine illumination, and precious faith is wrought in me, by which I embrace the Rock for want of a shelter, and I am brought by my Redeemer-God into the banquetting house of covenant love, then I am not ashamed, and my favoured soul can sing,—

“ See, on the cursed tree,
Thy dear Redeemer hangs;
The torment due to thee,
He bears in dreadful pangs;
And cancelled there the mighty sum,
Sins present, past, and sins to come.”

In a believing view of our adorable Emmanuel we lose sight of all sin, guilt, condemnation, and shame, for all our black transgressions are swallowed up in the ocean of covenant love. “For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty in My holy mountain.” What is this pride, and who are they that rejoice in it? Look at that portion referred to in the margin (Matt. iii. 9). John the Baptist said to the Jews, “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” This was as much as to say, Do not pride yourselves in your religious pedigree or proficiency, or to your belonging to a Scriptural Church. Ah, my dear friends, it is possible to belong to the purest association outwardly and pass muster before men, yet have no part or lot with those whose names are enrolled in heaven. Yes, in providence your lot may be cast among a people sound in doctrine, savoury in experience, and consistent in practice, while your hearts are as destitute of Divine love, life, light, and liberty, as the greatest heathen under the sun. It is a glorious day when sins are not remembered, opposers are taken away, pride is excluded, and haughtiness humbled. You may rest assured of this, when the child of God is brought down upon the knees of his soul, crying for mercy from the depths of a bruised heart and broken spirit, with all his fleshly religion burnt up, and feelingly desolate and ready to perish, and perish

he must if the Lord interpose not, then, his haughtiness is gone. Look at that precious 12th verse: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD." I like this afflicted and poor people, who in all their privations and perplexities are found trusting in the name of the Lord. They cannot trust in anything else for their salvation and security. When taught by His Spirit, and blessed with His guidance, they feel the spirit of envy, jealousy, and pride cast out. They are privileged to sit at the feet of Jesus, clothed in His righteousness, and possessing the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Here they delight in the gifts of His grace, and brought into the realisation of these truths, they are ever learning lessons painful but profitable, which none but He can teach. They make repeated discoveries of the fact that they belong to a despised few among many professors. I find this more and more the longer I live. The Lord graciously teaches me to maintain a narrow circle of spiritual acquaintance with a loving heart of His own giving. In the feelings of my heart I am oftentimes the most lonely man in all London. You may think that I could surely find spiritual associates with whom I could take sweet counsel; but let me tell you, I can only find spiritual oneness with any of His scattered ones as He is pleased to work it in my heart. Now let us notice the words of the text:—

I.—"*The remnant of Israel.*" Look at the expression. Mark well the exact words. It is not "Israel the remnant," the elect distinguished from the reprobate mass; but "*The remnant of Israel.*" There is something terribly searching in the experience of the child of God flowing from teaching like this. It leads the mind to the consideration of the solemn truth that there is Israel, *and* Israel. Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the spirit. See Rom. ix. 6: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." If you notice the popular theories of the day concerning Israel, they will lead you contrary to the teaching of Divine revelation. They begin in the flesh and end in the flesh. But we are told, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. ix. 8). Who, then, are the spiritual Israel? Those whom the Holy Ghost speaks of as "*the Israel of God*" (Gal. vi. 16). You will find them spoken of throughout the Word as Israel, Jacob, the seed of Abraham, the Church, the elect, the redeemed. Elect, because they form the objects of His eternal choice. Redeemed, because they are the purchase of Christ's blood. Children of Abraham, because they possess like precious faith with him. Jacob, because they are weak and wavering ones. Israel, because they are brought to understand their composite characters as supplanters yet saved—pleaders yet prevailers—poor yet princes—feelingly afar off, yet ever very nigh to JEHOVAH.

They are wrestlers, pleaders, prevailers, princes. They are the true Israel, at whose head Jesus is seen by the eye of faith as, "THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Mark xv. 26). Turn with me to Rom. ii. 28, 29: "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly." Is that true? It would not be in God's written Word if it were not. He is not a Jew in JEHOVAH'S estimation "which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." You read the same truth in Phil. iii. 3: "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." These are the persons who, by the power of Divine grace, have had all creature confidence knocked out of them. Now come with me to Gal. iii. 28, 29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for they are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." In the Old Testament dispensation the line of demarcation between Jew and Gentile was preserved complete. In the New Testament dispensation this line of demarcation is obliterated. Turn with me to Eph. ii. 11: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here we see elect Jews and Gentiles spiritually one in Christ, loved with the same love, and blessed with the same imperishable privileges. But men and devils will make distinctions where God sees none. Societies are in existence for the conversion of the Jews, as though God had a Gospel specially for them and another for the Gentiles. But the Gospel is the same throughout the universe for the ingathering of God's own elect, who are thereby brought to acknowledge Christ as their glorious King. You have this revealed in John i. 47—49: "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no

guile." That is the kind of Israelite I love. "Nathaniel saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." The King of all the spiritual Jews. But mark well those words,

"*The remnant of Israel.*" Did you notice those words I quoted from Rom. ix. 6—8?—"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Now, my dear friends, where are you? Outward privileges are no evidences of inward grace. You may make a fair show in religious attainments, and be able to deal out a gracious experience with a fluent tongue, but the experience may be copied, borrowed, ay, taken from this blessed Book; but if it is not in you by the grace and indwelling of the blessed Spirit, it is worth nothing, and can only seal your condemnation. In the midst of a people God has a people. When you see a people gathered together who profess godliness, there will be a people in the midst of them, yet distinct from them who possess it. Professors and possessors meet together, but the Lord can distinguish the one from the other. A multitude may own the truth of the preached Word, but only a few can experience the power and preciousness of it. Only a remnant is found worshipping a sovereign JEHOVAH in spirit and in truth. We have several Scriptural narratives illustrating this solemn heart-searching fact. Turn with me to Judges vii. 14. Here we see Gideon surrounded by his two-and-thirty thousand warriors. "And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." A sifting took place, when Gideon was left with ten thousand men. These were yet too many, when at God's command they were brought down to the water, "And the LORD said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink." Thus the people were reduced to three hundred. The remnant of Israel in Gideon's time. O, say you, I should like to know that I am a sheep and not a dog. Well, I have no objection to keep company with that poor creature whose little history is recorded in Matt. xv. 21—28, who claimed kindred with the dogs of JEHOVAH'S household, saying, "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." It is a blessed privilege to be one of God's dogs, "for a living dog is better than a dead lion"

(Eccles. ix. 4). Another illustration of this truth is given to us in the case of Elijah, quoted by Paul in Rom. xi. 2—5: “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” Look again at Matt. xx. At the close of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, Jesus says, “Many be called, but few chosen.” O, my dear friends, where are we? Many are moved by the outward call of the Gospel, but few in that many are tested and proved as God’s own, in whose experience the Holy Ghost has fulfilled the truth of those words, “*all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy*.” Oh, how blessed it is to enjoy a gracious lift out of ourselves and our earthly surroundings into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and to have Himself, and Himself alone, as the sum-total of our religion! Again I ask, Where are we? Of so small a company as twelve Christ could say, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.” If this be true, will He not discern and distinguish who are His and who are not in our midst to-night? Are we possessors of His grace, or mere professors? Are we among the reserved, redeemed, and regenerate people of God, or are we dead in sin, destitute of His life, love, light, and liberty? May He decide the case by the searching power of His Spirit. Surely God’s living people form but a very small remnant of the vast mass of religious professors in the world. But we will now look at the wonderful privileges they possess, and set forth in this precious text.

“*The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity.*” I think I catch the sigh of a sin-burdened one confessing: O surely then I can have no part or lot with the remnant, for I am forced to confess daily that my transgressions are great, my sins many, and the burden of my iniquity intolerable. But in the text, the remnant are described in experimental oneness with the great and glorious Head of grace. As seen in the light of His perfections, the Church is seen by the Father free from all sin, and possessing a nature which can never sin (1 John iii. 9). But if I speak of myself, I must honestly confess with Paul: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. vii. 18). In myself I can only find sin, corruption, depravity, and iniquity, so that I am compelled often to cry from the depths of an exercised heart:—

“Not on me, Lord, not on me;
I am all iniquity!
Look on Thine Anointed One
Who, before Thy glorious throne,

On His breast bears my poor name,
 All my load of sin and shame—
 Look on Him—my Surety."

When I approach my God in prayer, I am conscious of the power of my iniquity. If I join in His praises, a sense of iniquity mars my joy. If I preach, I am oftentimes reminded of the iniquity of my nature, my thoughts, my words and works. But look here! If the prayer, praise, or preaching is of God's own producing, if the intercession of the Spirit is experienced in me, my God sees no iniquity in them. In all my wretched efforts, I can see nothing else but iniquity. Here it is blessed to know the spirituality of that type revealed in Exodus xxviii. 38, where Aaron is represented as bearing the iniquity of Israel's holy things, that they may be accepted before the LORD. In this I see Christ my High Priest in His full atonement for me, having endured the sufferings which must have been mine in an eternal hell, and having settled every question of sin between His Father and mine, my heart is cheered, and my spirit loathes to do iniquity. The poor dying thief could not do iniquity when he experienced life and love flowing from the eyes of the dear Redeemer who was dying by His side. He rebuked his companion in crime, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke xxiii. 40, 41). Let me ask you, What iniquity could the poor woman do when the words of the Master sounded like heavenly music to her ears as He said to Simon: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven?" And especially when He said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." Mark the exact language of the Master: "Her sins which *are* many," not which *were* many. By the convicting power of the Spirit, we mourn our manifold sins, yet find it very precious to sing that truth which dear John Kent had kept so prominently before his mind:—

"Here's pardon full for sin that's past,
 It matters not how black the cast;
 And, O my soul, with wonder view,
 For sins to come here's pardon too."

Let me experience this—know it in my heart, feel my Father's hand of blessing upon me, and the sweet impress of His kiss of reconciling love, then I have no sense of sin, neither can I do iniquity. This reminds me of dear Old Alice Banks, who, speaking of the blessing she had received at a cottage meeting, said, "*Well! the Lord did bless us the other night. My heart was in heaven. Eh, mon! I forgot this old carcase altogether. Sin was gone. Jesus was precious, and there mightn't have been a devil. Well, when Jesus is All in all to our hearts, the devil is put to flight.*" Look at the case of the poor woman whom punctilious Pharisees would have stoned, but Jesus would save, and He did. Has

He ever spoken to your heart those precious words of justifying grace : "Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more?" Has He broken your heart with a sense of His love? Has He shown you His hands, and side, and feet, and once thorn-crowned brow? Has He made your heart glad with His presence? If He has, at such times you could not do iniquity. To say that this leads to licentiousness, is a libel on God's truth.

"Nor speaks lies." O Lord, some of us may say, what with lying tongues and deceitful hearts, what else can we do but speak lies? We can think them. Of ancient Israel it is said : "Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouths, and lied unto Him with their tongues" (Psalm lxxviii. 36). Are we better than they? In no wise. My sympathy runs out to godly men who are commercial travellers, or otherwise engaged in trade, who are compelled to face the godless competition of the day. Are there any such here? Let me ask you, Is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, always ready at the end of your tongue? You know it is not as you are met by the close-fisted, hard-headed, and cruel-hearted trade sharks of your surroundings. I thank God from my heart that I am not in so trying a position, knowing the deceitfulness of my nature. What should I do in this respect if left to myself? What did Peter? What did Rahab? Are we made of better stuff? I am not. "O to grace how great a debtor!" But when we come to the truth of God's salvation, we do not thank Him for enabling us to help Him to save us. We discard altogether a salvation partly of grace and partly of merit. We know nothing of JEHOVAH'S will assisted by the creature's effort. We hate the preaching of free-grace in the morning, free-will in the evening, and a horrible hash of both at noon. We confess our utter helplessness in salvation matters, and ascribe all the glory of our redemption and preservation to God alone.

"Neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth." Knowing the truth that salvation is all of grace from first to last, they are made bold in their God to confess it. They see, feel, and speak of grace in design, determination, and doing, and when brought to speak of themselves before God, they make a clean breast of all their sins, follies, and infirmities. Were it not for free and sovereign grace, where would you and I be? Can a deceitful tongue be found in your mouth when you are embraced in the arms of everlasting love? Can you lie when blessed with faith's view of a suffering Saviour? Can you visit with Hart the lowly depths of sad Gethsemane, and deceit then pass out of your mouth? No. A pure language is given to you, and you speak by the Spirit of truth in true humility :—

"Never, never may we dare
What we're not to say we are."

"For they shall feed and lie down." Is not that precious to

the afflicted and poor people, the remnant for whom all the earth is devoured with the fire of God's jealousy? Sometimes it seems an impossibility to be spiritually fed, as impossible as it seemed to Elijah by the brook Cherith. But it is not impossible to Elijah's God. Even in spiritual famine He provides messengers to carry provision to His hungering and thirsting people, or to lead them to plentiful spots where it abounds. He says to them: "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. iii. 15). These feed the people of God, not with free-will husks which swinish multitudes devour, but, as God's doves, upon pure corn. They eat spiritually the flesh and drink the blood of the Lamb (John vi.). To His Spirit-taught people, He says: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Cant. v. 1). Not only refreshment, but rest also—"They shall lie down." Human nature is awfully restless, despising rest and quietness; but God has provided both in the person and work of the Son of His love. How is this lying down effected? Ask David. Turn to Psalm xxiii. 2: "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*" The children of God in themselves are so contrary to Him, that were it not for His making, they would never rest in Him. But He will bring the waster to destroy our earthly comforts, until—

"Weary of earth, and self, and sin"—

we are glad to lay our weary heads to rest upon the bosom of everlasting love, and on the green bed of covenant promises.

"*And none shall make them afraid.*" Who made Daniel afraid in the den of lions? or the three Hebrew children in the burning fiery furnace? Who could terrify Paul when the Angel of the covenant appeared to him in the midst of the waves and billows of the Adriatic? (Acts xxvii. 23—25). Blessed with the experience of Romans viii., though Satan assaults, the world condemns, and corruptions seethe and surge, as assuredly as we are taught of God, we shall know what that means: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Blessed be God for that declaration. In pain of body and perplexity of mind, He will teach us to say: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." No mistake, no fear there. Blessed with an experience so precious, the devil will not let us alone long together; but never mind, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." "Who is he that can harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?"

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

S A F E G U A R D .

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,
MARCH 25TH, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“Abide thou with me, fear not : for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life ; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.”—1 Sam. xxii. 23.

“**F**OR whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. xv. 4). It is no small mercy to be raised to a little hope, to experience the fluttering of Divine life in an anxious spirit, a “*bubbling up*” of love in the heart, or a desire to fear the name of a covenant God and Father in Christ (Neh. i. 11; Psa. xlv. 1). It is a special favour amid the perplexities of the wilderness, burdened with a body of death, and the continuous assaults of Satan, to be privileged to think upon His name (Mal. iii. 16). Also, when any portion of God’s most Holy Word is brought home to the heart with Divine power, giving us to see, know, and feel that the saints of God whose histories are written therein were men of like passions with ourselves, and that there is not a particle of difference between the feeblest child in faith’s family and the most highly-favoured one leaning upon a loving Saviour’s bosom, or privileged to occupy a place in the Scriptures of truth.

Let us look at the circumstances in connection with the words I have read for our meditation. We must go back to the commencement of chap. xxi. David, chased and persecuted by Saul, came to Nob, the city of the priests, and obtained hallowed bread from Ahimelech the priest. This was the presence, or showbread, which typified a precious Christ in oneness with His people as their Surety, Support, and Sustenance before God. David being an hungered, said to Ahimelech, “Now therefore what is under thy hand? give me five loaves

of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread. And David said, The bread is in a manner common, *especially when this day there is other sanctified in the vessel* (margin). So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread that was taken from before the Lord." Here we see David partaking of that which was consecrated solely for the priests. Turn with me to Matt. xii. 1—8; Mark ii. 23—28; and Luke vi. 1—5: there we read how our blessed Lord gave a cutting lesson to the Ritualists of His day: "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless. But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple." Things consecrated by man are pronounced common by Christ. Here we see God's veto put upon all that fleshly reverence and veneration for perishing things which prevail amongst Papists, Ritualists, and even those who hurl their anathemas against the trumperies of the Establishment. Here I would publicly confess before my God that I hate that dissenting dirt displayed in great swelling words and "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16). It is to my grief that I know many who can talk for hours about Joseph Irons, James Wells, and William Huntington, who do not speak as many minutes about Jesus Christ and His dealings with them. This is utterly contemptible in my estimation before God. I love to esteem those honoured men very highly for their work's sake, and to thank God for His precious testimony which He sent by them; but I believe it is dishonouring to my glorious Lord and contrary to the mind of His Spirit to mention their names for personal and party purposes, and to sow discord among the living children of God. Let us notice the narrative.

"Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul." This man looked on with an envious, jealous, and malicious eye. At his earliest opportunity he carries the report of the proceedings of David and Ahimelech to Saul. At the commencement of this 22nd chapter we find David in the cave of Adullam surrounded by "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, and he became a captain over them, and there were with him about four hundred men." Their number is declared and their characters described. Let us notice the name of the

captain. It is David. That means Beloved. The eye of God-wrought faith beholds a greater than David here, even the Father's best Beloved, God's Christ, David's Son, and David's Lord. Unto Him resort all those who are sore distressed with Satan's assaults, in debt to law and justice, and discontented with the burden of their manifold sins and transgressions. These are well described in the words of Hart,—

“ Lord, pity outcasts, vile and base,
The poor dependents on Thy grace,
Whom men disturbers call ;
By sinners and by saints withstood ;
For these too bad, for those too good,
Condemn'd or shunn'd by all.”

We now notice the treachery of Doeg in accusing Ahimelech to Saul, Saul's cruelty in commanding the destruction of the priests of the Lord, the refusal of the footmen to slay the priests, and the massacre of the priests by Doeg. “ And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of the persons of thy father's house.” Then come the words of our text:

“ Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.”

Twice lately, one Tuesday evening, and last Sunday morning, I directed your attention to the fact that Saul was a type of Satan. Notice his name. It is derived from Shoel, or Shaul, the Hebrew name for hell, the headquarters of the devil. Now notice his disposition. It was envious, jealous, crafty, and cruel, ever hating God's anointed. What a striking contrast we see between David, the anointed of God, and Saul, the rejected of God and the hater of God's anointed. Left to himself and to the broodings of his evil nature, Saul could do nothing but plot, scheme, and act against David, upon whom God had thrust signal honour in anointing him king over His people Israel. As we look at this in a spiritual light we see God's Christ, God's Anointed and Satan opposed to every declaration of His might, majesty, and sovereignty. Satan's enmity is revealed in the first announcement of God's salvation in the ears of lost sinners, and spoken right in the teeth of the old serpent: “ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel ” (Gen. iii. 15). Throughout the book of Revelation we see Satan opposed of God's Christ. Turn to chap. xvii. 14: “ These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are

called, and chosen, and faithful." Who are these that shall make war with the Lamb? Satan and his infernal legions, with his hateful brood upon earth who are moved with enmity and malice against the Christ of God wherever He appears for the good of His people. In the writings of John you will find this peculiarity, when Jesus is revealed triumphing over the enemies of His people, Satan is always opposed to Him. See 1 John iii. 8: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." Look at John xiv. 30: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." In the writings of Paul we find the same truths. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death—that is, the devil" (Heb. ii. 14). Satan will ever seek to annoy Christ in his attacks upon His members, hence the injunction, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8). He knows full well that there are some whom he may not devour. He knew and acknowledged this fact before God in the case of Job, when he said, "Hast not Thou made a hedge about him?" (Job i. 10). Satan was allowed to touch Job's body, relatives, and possessions; but he could not touch Job's life, which was God's Christ in him. God's Christ was Job's living Redeemer, and without Him Job had no experience of life whatever. Thus blessed he was the object of Satan's attacks. That is a terrible truth in the experience of God's living children,

"He worries whom he can't devour
With a malicious joy."

We see him in the person of Saul seeking the destruction of David, and causing the murder of the priests at Nob. Notice again these words of David to Abiathar: "I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." Can we not see Christ typified in these words? Certainly we can. All the enmity, malice, spite, and spleen of Satan and his brood against the saints of the Most High God, is occasioned by the appearance of Christ for them, Christ with them, and Christ in them. See how the Master sets this before His sorrowing disciples in John xv. 18: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept My saying, they will keep your's also. But all these things

will they do unto you *for My name's sake*, because they know not Him that sent Me." There you see the secret of the world's hatred and Satan's enmity. Turn over to the seventeenth chapter, which displays the heart of God's Christ with His love to His people. At the twelfth verse He says to His Father: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition"—not the Son of God, but Judas the son of Satan, who, I believe, was an incarnate devil (John vi. 70)—"that the Scripture might be fulfilled." There you see Divine sovereignty again. God's Word and will must be fulfilled; it matters not what means may be taken for their accomplishment. Sometimes God's means stagger the faith of His own giving, and perplex the chastened spirits of His children; nevertheless, true faith waits patiently for the explanation of His purpose, and sits in the dark, looking for the breaking of the day. "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The gift of the Father's Word, and the communication of His mind and will to any of His eternally-loved ones, are sure signs of Satan's enmity and rage, because he knows his time is short. The time for the display of his hatred against us is short indeed. It may be only for a few short weeks, or months, or years at the most, when all his rage will be exhausted, and our ransomed spirits will be carried safely beyond his reach. He knows this, and therefore vents his spleen against us to the utmost, but his utmost proves his defeat. But when his assaults fail to shatter the foundation of our faith, he will do his utmost to sap and mine my little hope with his insinuations, blandishments, and flatteries. But, blessed be God, "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. xxxiii. 27), and "The foundation of the Lord standeth sure" (2 Tim. ii. 19).

"The Gospel bears my spirit up:
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

It is blessed to find, in the midst of Old Testament types and shadows, God's Christ, as the Friend, Companion, and Counsellor of His tried and tempted people. In David's outcast band surrounding him, we see ourselves gathered to the Friend who shows Himself friendly to us, and who sticketh closer than a brother. As our best Friend, He has claimed and acknowledged us as His own peculiar property—His Father's Gift—the Purchase of His blood—the Fruit of His soul travail—the Conquest of His Spirit—to show the riches of His grace and glory in their eternal salvation. Does one near and dear to Him resort to Him

when distress and danger thicken around him? As David said to Abiathar, so the Friend of sinners will speak home to the exercised heart: "*Abide thou with Me.*" Though David was the Lord's anointed, he was cast out and persecuted by men, and, in his words of gracious counsel, we hear the voice of God's Christ. Is the Christ of the Bible loved, honoured, and adored in these days of flaming profession? I answer unhesitatingly, No. An ideal saviour is acknowledged, but the elect, anointed, and appointed Saviour of God's elect, anointed, and appointed people, is almost universally hated and despised. Those who are identified with Him in election must be associated with Him in rejection. Those who are blessed with Heaven's favours must endure the proud world's frowns. As assuredly as you have by grace resorted to Christ for salvation, grace, and glory, you will know and feel something of what it is to be saved from. Have you been blessed with the bedewing and anointing of the Holy Ghost to know that precious truth: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant?" (Psalm xxv. 14.) Then the communication of His secret and the unfolding of the glorious covenant of grace has endeared the despised and rejected Man of sorrows to your heart, and His own sweet words of grace and love have dropped with savour and power upon your exercised spirits: "*Abide thou with Me, fear not.*" Look at the necessity there is for this precious new covenant command. The people of God are few in comparison to the mass of unregenerate mankind around them; their fears are many; their foes are legion. Oftentimes they are filled with doubts, anxieties, and cares, and fear because of their wretched surroundings, and the discontent and disquiet of the flesh. Accursed unbelief works sad havoc in the experience of a living child of grace, calling into question the truth of the promises of God's most Holy Word. I know there are mightily clever ones who say they can take God's promises home to their comfort and consolation any hour of the day; but let me tell them they are deluded in this matter, for the poor child of God finds it utterly impossible to do anything of the kind. Proud professors may fly high in the regions of a religious Utopia; but the living members of a once-suffering Christ, like Abiathar, will oftentimes fear, lest they may perish by the hand of an enemy, and by the power of hateful unbelief. There is another foe which Satan pits against the life of God in the souls of His people, and that is wretched indifference. Know ye what this is? You possess an open Bible, means of grace, and the glorious Gospel of the blessed God preached from an exercised and chastened spirit, yet, with such privileges and blessings surrounding you, let me ask, Where are you? The confession of your heart before God is that you are oftentimes indifferent to His choicest mercies, to the brightest manifestations of His grace, to the joys and sorrows of His people, and to the

gracious revelation He has given of a suffering, sorrowing, and sympathising Saviour, ay, as indifferent as the three favoured ones were in the presence of the glory on Tabor's mount when they were overpowered with sleep, or when they fell asleep in view of the agony and bloody sweat of our adorable Emmanuel in gloomy, dark Gethsemane. He commanded them to watch and pray, but He found them fast asleep. Know ye aught of infirmities like these? Indeed you do. The love of the Father's heart has been opened up in His blessed Word; the affections of a dear Redeemer have been revealed in the Gospel of His grace; the choicest blessings of the covenant have been spread before you by the Holy Ghost, while you have been left to mourn over the possession of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and a deceitful heart which would ever keep you indifferent to the claims of your loving Lord and Saviour. Ah, my dear friends, we are not only indifferent, but cowardice and fear cause us to forsake our faithful Friend, and seek enjoyment among the potsherds of this world. When the fear of frowning justice, and the dread of hell's fierce flames chase us to His sacred feet, it is then He opens His loving arms, and displays the compassions of His heart, while He sweetly whispers, "*Abide thou with Me, fear not.*" There is no safety, succour, or sympathy like that enjoyed in communion with the Christ of God. Friends and favourites of the meek and lowly Jesus, are your distresses and perplexities many this morning? Does the future appear dark and threatening to you? Are you brooding over the bitter past? Do foes innumerable advance on every hand? These precious words from the grace-filled lips of our spiritual David dropped into your heart, will inspire you with confidence and encouragement, which nothing else can give. When foes threaten, when fears prevail, when hope wavers, when high-flyers distress the mind with their presumptuous prattle, a sight of Jesus is very precious.

"*Fear not.*" We should not have so many "*Fear nots*" in God's blessed Word if His dear children were not subject to many fears. You may rest assured that there is not a superfluous "*Fear not*" within the covers of this blessed Book, and it is of God's mercy we know that there is not a perplexity in providence, or a privation in our experience, but God has a precious "*Fear not*" in store for it. That is a very blessed declaration of experimental truth which we sang at our prayer meeting last Friday evening from the last verse of the 389th hymn of dear Joseph Irons:—

"All their petitions He inspires,
For all their wants He sees;
Their very feelings and desires
Are mark'd in His decrees."

I love to see God's sovereignty revealed in every want, desire, privation, or perplexity that my heart can experience. Let us

look at a few of God's "*Fear nots*" in His written Word. Turn to Gen. xv. 1: "After these things the Word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." That is the eternal Word—a living, loving, glorious Person, the Protector and Provider of His doubting, fearing servant. Abram, though faithful, was very fearful. After he had returned flushed with victory from the slaughter of the kings, and had received the blessing of Melchizedec, he gave way to fears which necessitated a visit and a "*Fear not*" from his ever-loving and ever-watchful Lord. To the doubting and fearing Gideon JEHOVAH said, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die" (Judges vi. 23). To His scattered and persecuted people He comes with His words of grace and sweet encouragement, "Fear thou not: for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isa. xli. 10). To His weaklings He conveys His gracious promise, "Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." When Daniel stood breathless and trembling at the revelation of Christ to him, his fears were allayed by the gracious words, "O man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong" (Dan. x. 19). Turn to Luke v. 1—11, where we see Peter and his fellows in the fishing boat. The miraculous draught of fishes amazes them, while the sinking ship affrights them. Faithlessness and fearfulness cause them to beckon to their partners, forgetting that Jesus was in the ship. Ofttimes we are busy with our partners and fellow-heirs of grace when none but Jesus can help and succour us. To astonished Simon Jesus said, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." When no small tempest beset the corn ship of Alexandria, Paul received no little encouragement from his gracious Deliverer, as recorded in his own words in Acts xxvii. 23, 24: "For there stood by me this night the Angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." To the highly-favoured John, who was privileged to lean upon a loving Saviour's bosom, sweet encouragement was conveyed in one of Jesus' gracious "*Fear nots*." In the lonely seagirt isle of Patmos he trembled and feared at the appearance of his faithful Friend, who laid His hand of blessing upon him, saying, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Yes, God's children have their many fears, for which He thinks none the worse of them. Let me direct your attention to that precious chapter, Mark xvi. Here almost every phase and feature of doubting and fearing experi-

ence is represented. To the affrighted women the angel said, "Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." Sweet words to greet the ears of the loving, yet timid and frightened women who were the last at the cross and first at the sepulchre. If Jesus was crucified for me, what have I to fear? If He rose again for me, why should I be afraid? The women hastened from the sepulchre trembling, amazed, afraid, though they had heard words of gracious encouragement. "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept." Here we see the friends of Jesus mourning over His absence, and weeping for His presence. To His affrighted, mourning, weeping, and unbelieving disciples a precious Jesus comes with His heart-cheering "*Fear not.*" Are there any of His fearing ones here this morning? To such He may say, in the words of my text, "*Abide thou with Me: fear not.*" To this, words of warning and instruction are added.

"*For he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life.*" "*My life.*" This leads us to the contemplation of the glorious fact that our spiritual and eternal life is secure in Christ. Some may sing,

"There is life *for* a look at the crucified One ;"

and I do not believe it. I can do with this—

"There is life *in* a look at the crucified One."

In His favour is life. Let Him show us His sacred hands and feet once pierced because of our sins—let Him reveal to our gaze His riven side, and that brow once crowned with cursed thorns, let Him reveal to us that visage which was once marred more than any man's, and we shall instantly experience the pulsations of His own life within us. Possessing this life in oneness with Himself, our inquiry oft will be, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68). It is He "who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). It is He who said to John, in the isle of Patmos, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 18). It is He who speaks to His sorrowing ones these words of real encouragement, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). The Lord of life and glory experienced the death that was due to us, the Just One suffered for the unjust ones to bring them to God, partakers of His resurrection life, and partners of His throne. In the presence of His Father He ever lives to make intercession for all those whom He saves to the uttermost, and who come to God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25). To the Colossian Christians the Holy Ghost could say by Paul,

"Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ our Life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 3, 4). When He who is our Life appears to us now by the grace of the Holy Ghost, the law's curses are silenced, the world's charms are broken, sin's burden is removed, death's terrors depart, and hell's torments no longer terrify. Look at those precious words of His in John v. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." It says not that the believer *shall have for believing*, but that *he hath in believing*, everlasting life. It is not his believing that makes him live, but it is his Life that makes him believe. "He that hath the Son, hath Life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life" (1 John v. 12). Mark you, as assuredly as you are in possession of this life Satan will seek to take it from you. He, who sought to take the life of the lowly Babe of Bethlehem by the hands of the blood-thirsty Herod, who sought to take it by the hands of the religious mob in the synagogue at Nazareth, who seemed to take it on the heights of Calvary, when the sinless Sufferer bowed His head to meet death, which never could reach to the height of His perfections, he will ever seek to take God's life from you. Jesus, in love to His people, bowed His head to meet their death, and endure it. In meeting it He died. In dying He destroyed its power, and now reveals Himself as the glorious Life of His people—a life which can never cease. In the experience of this, and of our eternal oneness with Him, by the power and indwelling of His Spirit, we may well sing,

"If my immortal Saviour lives,
Then my immortal life is sure,
His word a firm foundation gives;
Built on this Rock I rest secure."

Satan may seek to destroy God's life in the souls of the elect, but he can never touch it. He may spoil my earthly possessions, mar my peace, disturb my quiet, and cause disorder, destruction, and death to fly around me, but he can never touch the life of God's own giving. It is treasured and abides secure in the person of God's Christ, who is my Peace in the presence of His Father and mine. How precious it is for us to know that we have such a David as this! A loving Brother—a faithful Friend—a constant Companion. Am I desolate? He says, "*Abide thou with Me.*" Am I in danger? He says, "*Fear not.*" Does Satan seek to slay me? He says, "*Thou shalt never die.*" "He that seeketh thy life seeketh My life." He will seek it from the cradle to the grave—from the first sigh in regeneration to the first shout in glory; but when flesh and heart shall fail, Christ will be the strength of the heart, and His living one's portion for ever.

"With me thou shalt be in safeguard." I do love those precious words, *"With me."*

"Hail, sacred union, firm and strong !
How great the grace ! how sweet the song !
That rebel worms should ever be
One with incarnate Deity.

One in the tomb ; one when He rose ;
One when He triumph'd o'er His foes ;
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat."

Hell may seek the life of God's elect, but hell will be defeated. Satan may seek to destroy the peace of God's children, but the God of peace will bruise him under their feet shortly. *With Christ* they appeared in covenant before the foundation of the world. In incarnation they were *with Him* when He claimed them as the true seed of Abraham (Heb. ii. 16). In eternal redemption they are identified *with Him*. In resurrection life they continue *with Him*. In ascension glory they shall appear *with Him*. In all their sufferings, sorrows, temptations, and tribulations He will be *with them*, and bless each of them with the fulfilment of His covenant promise, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. xxviii. 15). Sweetly enjoying this precious fact, my exercised spirit cries,—

"And when I'm to die
Receive me I'll cry,
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why ;
But this I do find,
We two are so joined,
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind."

"In safeguard." Around the elect of God a glorious guard of angels ever stand. A convoy of the heavenly army ever attends them.

"Angels unseen around the saints
Their guardian pinions spread,
To cheer the spirit when it faints,
And raise the drooping head."

But this is better than angels' protection—

"The angels' Lord Himself is nigh
To them that love His name ;
Ready to save them when they cry,
And put their foes to shame."

Atoning blood is the protection of the redeemed. So Israel in Egypt found it when the destroying angel passed over them. JEHOVAH shut in the ark was Noah's safeguard there. To the whole Church of God His precious promise holds good—"For I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 5). God's Christ is the safeguard of His people. There is, therefore, now no

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). Shall we not, in the contemplation of this precious truth, join in the triumphant language of Paul, and say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 33—39).

With Christ for ever secure. O ye trembling, fearing, doubting, unbelieving believers, with Christ, and in Christ, you shall tread upon the young lion and the old dragon, and remain in eternal safeguard. May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

H Y M N.

IN union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free,
The saints from everlasting were,
And shall for ever be.

IN cov'nant from of old,
The sons of God they were;
The feeblest lamb in Jesus' fold
Was blest in Jesus there.

Its bonds shall never break,
Though earth's old columns bow;
The strong, the tempted, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now.

With joy lift up your heads,
Ye highly favoured few,
When through the earth destruction spreads;
For what shall injure you?

When storms or tempests rise,
Or sins your peace assail,
Your hope in Jesus never dies,
'Tis cast within the veil.

Here let the weary rest,
Who love the Saviour's name;
Though with no sweet enjoyment blest,
This cov'nant stands the same.

JOHN KENT.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

TRAVELLING IN TEARS.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
APRIL 4TH, 1880, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“They shall come with weeping.”—Jeremiah xxxi. 9.

IF I were to have my own way to-night, I would repeat the last verse of the hymn we have just now sung, and at once retire from your view. I can truly say,—

“My soul anticipates the day,
Would stretch her wings and soar away,
To aid the song, a palm to bear,
And bow—the chief of sinners—there.”

But I am left in the wilderness for a little while, and without either pride or presumption, but with a little faith of His own giving, I can sigh or sing:—

“But hush, my soul, nor dare repine,
The time thy God appoints is best ;
While here to do His will be mine,
And His to fix my time of rest.”

Therefore, in the blest experience of the truth of those precious words, I can say to Him, “Thy will be done.” I love the spirit of those words which you heard in the God-given prayer of this morning—it was not mine, I have none in my nature ; it was all His own:—

“It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all Divine ;
He has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine.”

At His bidding and at His behest, I am here to-night to speak a few words in His name, for His glory, for the exaltation of His Christ, for the honour of His Spirit, and for the comfort and consolation of His tried and tempted ones whom He, in His gracious providence, has gathered by the power of His Spirit

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to the name, to the person, to the preciousness, and to the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not mine to say any more by way of introduction, but, in humble dependence upon the guidance and grace of His blessed Spirit, seek to direct your attention to the few precious words I have read to you for my text. Look at them. "*They shall come with weeping.*"

I.—THE PERSONS—"They."

II.—THE CERTAINTY—"Shall."

III.—THE PROGRESS—"Come."

IV.—THE CHARACTERISTIC—"With weeping."

I.—Notice the persons set before us in the text. Who are they? What are they? They are a remnant, according to the description given of them in the whole of the immediate context both before and after. A remnant whom God has owned and acknowledged as His peculiar property. Look at the description given of them in the first verse: "At the same time." I shall not say anything now concerning the time, but ask *you*, who love to rummage through the contents of your Bibles, to notice well that which goes before, throughout the whole of chapter xxx., and as you read, may God give unto you a spiritual understanding of the truths contained therein. May He give you to know where you are, and what you are. May He give you to know that your characters are described therein as His elect, redeemed, and regenerate ones; or, if you are not redeemed, if you are not regenerate, may He, by the power of His truth, chase you away from this place, for He knows I do not want you, and I know my yoke fellows in the Gospel who have to do with the temporal affairs of this place do not want you. They have been brought along with me to understand that which I have read in your hearing from the sixth chapter of the Gospel by John—the separating power of Divine truth, the discriminating grace therein, showing who are the children of the living God, and who are the children of the devil. But, "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." You will find in the twenty-seventh chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah (ver. 13): "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." Look at the fifth chapter of this very prophecy, verse 14: "I will take you one of a city and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." But here it is, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel." This shows to us the glorious truth that God is a Sovereign in all His ways and in all His works. It has pleased Him to bring me into contact now and again with graciously-favoured families. Some of those I can look upon, and I have scarcely a doubt as to their standing amongst God's elect, redeemed, and regenerate people. There are some of them concerning whom I may hesitate a little, but I would not like to say with others, even of the same family: "*He knows nothing at*

all about it." I cannot do that because I love to experience even a little hope in my heart toward the doubtful ones in a favoured family. I do; I love to experience a little of that forbearance which the Master had toward His weaklings. I love to know what that means: "For who hath despised the day of small things" (Zech. iv. 10)? I love to dwell in a low place, to meet with the meek and lowly ones. But I say, I have known some families in which I should have all my work before me to point to either one member or another and say, "Well, they are out of the secret. They give no evidence of their names being written in the old family register; they bear no marks of eternal and perfect redemption." They may be lacking many of the marks of spiritual regeneration; but I am not the judge in these matters, therefore, in that charity which God has wrought in my heart, and which He increases more and more as He brings me into a knowledge of Himself, I say He has His doubtful favoured ones in families. He has His families according to His godly wisdom and unerring sovereignty. Well now, says God, "At that time, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." Certain persons may say, "I am not certain, I am not quite sure in my mind about John, or Edward, or James." "Well, never mind what you think," says the Lord, "I know all about them: My foundation standeth sure, and I know who are Mine." What we have to do to-night is to seek from Him to know whether we are quite right or not; whether our names are in the old family register; whether we are sprinkled with atoning blood; whether we are found at His feet washed in His precious blood, clothed in His righteousness, and longing to know whether He will wash us again, and again, and again; ay, even to the last moment of our pilgrimage here below. Ah! my dear friends, if God only made His religion more personal in the experiences of His own children, would they not think twice before they spoke in judgment on each other? But I must pass on to notice the description God gives of the persons mentioned in the text.

"The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness." What do you think about that? "The people which were left of the sword." When a truly-quickened and spiritually-taught child of God reads of a "sword" in God's blessed Book, and especially when it has to do with the spiritual experience or history of God's own children as they pass through the wilderness, he at once flies on the wings of spiritual knowledge and understanding for the manifestation of that sword of Divine justice which turned every way to keep the way of the Tree of Life (Gen. iii. 24). Not the sword of Divine justice to chase away God's elect and redeemed ones from the participation of those spiritual blessings, bounties, and benefits which the Father treasured up in the Son of His love. Not that, but the sword of Divine justice which turned every way to

ward off Satan's brood, to chase away all adversaries, and to defend the child of God coming in the way, and to keep him safe and secure in the spiritual enjoyment of those blessings which the Father had made safe unto him in the Son of His love. In the blest experience of this, the child of God is to know something of that which you find in the thirteenth chapter of the prophecies of Zechariah, seventh verse, from which I wanted to preach on Good Friday. You may ask why I wanted to preach from it. Well, I suppose there is such an amount of *churchianity* in my religious nature, that I wanted a text suitable to the occasion. Ah! but you see God will suit His texts and messages to the exercises which He works in the hearts of His own children. It was the same on Easter Sunday. I wanted an Easter Sunday text. Well, God gave me one, and I had to speak from it, and give out words of His own communicating. On Good Friday, I wanted to speak from that text, but could not: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones." Yes, the Shepherd was smitten, the Shepherd was wounded, killed, slaughtered in the place of His sheep; and those who are left, those concerning whom He said to the mob in the garden, and concerning whom He said to Satan, sin, hell, and judgment: "If ye seek Me, let these go their way," these graciously escape the sword. They sought Him, they wounded Him, slaughtered Him, and now you and I within these walls in spiritual association with Him must go our way, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus—blessed be His holy name—makes us free from the law of sin and of death. So it was with the people which were left from the sword in the wilderness. Pharaoh tried to slaughter them, but God graciously delivered them. On the shores of the Red Sea they sang His praises, but they were left to wander in the wilderness. They had to put up with wilderness fare, endure wilderness privations, experience wilderness perplexities, and so have you and I. The flesh is sure to appear, the world is sure to allure, yet it will be marvellous if you and I in spiritual oneness with our glorious Head are not led into the experience of the land of spiritual promise, and then taken captive again to enjoy the sweets of delivering grace. Grace found in the wilderness is spiritual rest. See!

"*Even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.*" "Oh!" say some, "if you have found grace and are in possession of *given rest*, surely you can keep it." Keep it! Are you able to keep anything that God gives to you? Are you? Ah! my dear friends, if you can, you are vastly different to myself, for I am not able to keep anything He is pleased to bestow upon me; but I rejoice in the fact He has revealed in His Word, and communicated to my heart by His blessed Spirit, that He will

keep for me every spiritual blessing which He has thrust upon me, and in the time of my necessity He will appear for my relief. Now that is God's truth as revealed in His Word, and opened up to the waiting hearts of His children. "*Even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.*" You will find in Matthew xi. how the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His own after a declaration of discriminating and distinguishing truth. He said to them: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Do you notice in that portion there are two rests, and yet they are one? *Rest given* from the curse and condemnation of the law, and *rest found* from the conflict which the child of God finds day by day from Amalek and Babylon, the flesh and the world. Delivered from the oppressing regions of legality, the child of the living God is brought to experience the oppression of his wretched flesh, and the world which would draw him away from communion, fellowship, and intercourse with a covenant God in Christ, if it were not for the immutability of God, and the indefectibility of His grace. He will keep His own in the face of all their weaknesses, iniquities, enmity, and incorrigibility, and will not let them go. Again, I want you to notice another portion. I like to throw out little hints in reference to His light which He has thrown upon special portions of His blessed Word, and which He has given for my spiritual peace and confidence before Him. It is that in Hebrews iv. 3, where the apostle says: "For we which have believed do enter into rest." He does not say: "We who have believed *have entered* into rest." I am quite aware that certain persons may be ready to pounce upon me and to say, "But it says also, 'They have entered into rest.'" Quite true; but that is not in this text. I love to look at every portion of God's Word in the way in which a quaint old fellow once counselled me. He said: "My dear lad, every nut has its own kernel; and if you crack a nut, you will not find the kernel of another nut inside." Here we see the mistake persons are making in endeavouring to drag one portion of God's Word to becloud another. Now the portion alluded to describes a truth which is patent in the spiritual experience of every truly-begotten child of God: "We which have believed *do* enter into rest." Ah! my dear friends, you cannot tell the exercises of this heart, the perplexities of this mind, as I have to mount those pulpit stairs. I said to one this morning: "*If you were my curate to-day, you would have to preach.*" I daresay he thought it was a mercy he was not, and that he had not a rector for the time being. But I come into the pulpit full of conflict, and according to the rich and discriminating grace of my God, I am proved to be one of the greatest unbelievers under the sun, for time after time I do enter into rest because He leads me there. He graciously, blessedly,

experimentally, with savour and with power, brings me into the enjoyment of His rest, and I enjoy deliverance from my restless spirit, from the perplexities and the anxieties of my doubting, fearing, unbelieving, and deceitful heart.

The Lord appears unto these, and says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." You see here we have a religion which is personal and experimental. Yea, not nay; no nay in this blessedness, according to that blessed and glorious hymn of dear old John Kent's, beginning with

"Father, we seek Thy grace."

In it he gives this blessed and glorious declaration concerning the covenant:—

" 'Tis like a living spring
Of waters sweet and clear;
There's not an 'if' to foul the stream.
Or 'peradventure' there.

Free in the Fountain Head,
The source from whence it came;
In 'wills' and 'shalls' of Gospel grace,
Eternally the same."

All the promises of God in Christ Jesus, Yea and Amen, and in the blessed experience of that the apostle declares: "Our preaching toward you was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea." No Arminian nay; no fleshly free-willism there; no carnal peradventure, but all Yea. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee." Mark that! They shall be broken down, they shall experience their wilderness condition again and again; but as often as they experience the staggering of their hope, the shattering of their faith, and the scattering of their love, the Lord will confirm His promise to them: "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built." I like that expression with the emphasis put in the right place, "Thou *shalt* be built." Thy wretched heart may say, "Nay," and the world *may* say, "Nay," but "thou *shalt* be built, and thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry."

Look at that blessed declaration given in the eighth verse: "Behold I will bring them from the North country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth." I will do it. A people scattered and peeled, but I will gather them, "and with them the blind and the lame." Any blind here to-night? "Oh, no!" says the blind Pharisee, "I see very clearly into the mind and the mystery of God; I understand His blessed Word; I cannot fail or fall in His school; I do not possess the fears of dull scholars; I see clearly." Have a care, conceited mortal; do not you be so ready. The Master once said to certain whose speech betrayed them, "Now ye say, We see; therefore your-

sin remaineth" (John ix. 41). Think of this, you who say, "We see." The Master says, "You are as blind as bats." The children of the living God who are brought into the sweet experience of the love of a covenant God, into the blessed conception of the Divine mind and will as recorded in His blessed Word, and brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost, are the persons who mourn their blindness, their forgetfulness, ignorance, want of spiritual conception, and they go to Him day by day, moment by moment, asking Him to anoint their eyes with eye-salve of His own providing, that they may have a true understanding and knowledge of Himself as revealed in His blessed Word.

But see : "*I will bring the blind and the lame.*" Any lame ones here to-night? There was once, about 1851 or 1852, a dear man worshipped in this place. We sing one or two of his blessed hymns now and again. He was the one whose soul was so much in harmony with a precious Christ as set forth from the anointed lips of the dear and now glorified Joseph Irons, that he held himself responsible for the publishing of dear old Joseph's sermons. Those of you who have the fourth volume of "Grove Chapel Pulpit," issued in 1852, will see a preface written by William Mushett, the author of that precious, glorious hymn :—

"More of Thy love, my God, I find
In every hour I live;
More of Thy peace, in heart and mind
Doth each sharp trial give.
Up to my Father's high decree
Each act in time I trace :
Up to the glorious Sovereign Three—
Almighty Fount of Grace."

Dear Mushett was one day passing away from one whom I love in the truth. He shook her warmly by the hand, and with a smile said, "You will go hobbling to glory." He little thought at that time that her future name would be Hoblyn. He went hobbling home to glory, and I believe she will go hobbling spiritually all the way to glory. She is sure to go there. I feel confident of that. But look at that! Hobbling to glory. Do you expect to go any other way? I do not. I do love that blessed and glorious declaration given in Genesis xxxii., where it says of Jacob, "And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh." That will do, my friends; if the Sun of Righteousness shines upon you, never mind the hobbling.

See a still further description of the persons brought before us in the text, "*The woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.*" "*The woman travailing with child.*" What are we to understand by this? See, it is a soul in spiritual soul travail, it is a soul in spiritual trouble, a sinner bending with spiritual anxiety, longing to bring forth a man-child. And what man-child is that? It is

that which an old Lancashire woman once said to me, "The new birth is nothing more or less than this, the bringing forth of a precious Christ in my heart the Hope of Glory." Is it not oftentimes a source of spiritual anxiety, distress, and perplexity, and a spiritual fact before your God that if Christ is not brought forth in your heart through the throbs and throes of the new birth, spiritual and eternal death must be yours? You know it for a fact. Look at this graphic description of these persons! Are you among them?

"I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all."

But I love not to linger upon this humbling, distressing, and perplexing part of the subject. Nevertheless, it is true. We will now notice,—

II.—THE CERTAINTY—"Shall." I love to dwell upon the covenant certainties which my gracious God and Lord has revealed in His glorious Gospel. I love to linger upon these precious certainties which He has made mine by the power of God the ever-blessed Spirit. I love to deal out those things concerning which a dear soul who heard God's testimony from my lips years ago, and who sat here the other Sunday, said, "Oh, dear, no change, the same song still!" And may it be the same song until this poor stammering tongue be silent in the grave. Then in resurrection power and ascension glory I shall sing forth the same truths in praise and adoration before the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne, that Lamb who has manifested His meek and lowly qualities to me, but who, on His throne, has revealed His marvellous, glorious sovereignty. "They *shall*," not, "they *may*." There are no "may be's" here: but these glorious "shall be's" are true, sure, and certain in all parts of Christ's spiritual dominion, throughout all time and to a never-ending eternity. It is our blessedness and our bliss to rejoice in the assurance of these precious truths which are given to us in these paraphrases which sweet singers in Israel have handed down to the Church. The first time I noticed this precious hymn was from the lips of our dear friend Matthew Welland, when God spoke them home to my heart, and they have not gone away from me since. Here you have it,—

"The people of JEHOVAH'S choice
Are register'd on high,
And they shall hear His sovereign voice,
And by His grace draw nigh.

Far off, deprav'd, and prone to stray,
But they *shall surely come*;
For cov'nant love marks out the way,
And brings the outcasts home.

Yes, they *shall come*, 'tis Heav'n's decree,
They shall to Jesus bow ;

This precious *shall come* conquer'd me,
And gives me comfort now.

I wander'd from Him —."

And I should wander from Him to-day were it not for His rich,
His abounding, His indefectible, invincible grace.

"I wander'd from Him while I could,
Till *shall come* stopt my feet ;
And now, through Jesus' precious blood,
I *shall come* to His seat."

Shall you? Shall you? Something seems to cry within me, "Shall you?" Lord, in Thy great, Thy marvellous, Thy rich, and Thine abounding grace, answer that question in the hearts, and in the spiritual understanding of Thy tried, tempted, perplexed, and anxious ones. "They *shall*." What a glorious declaration! I love that precious word which I read for you from John vi.—quoted, no, let us have things right—misquoted in every Arminian pulpit in the world, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Let us have it all, no short weight; let us have that which I have loved for many a long year, sixteen ounces to the pound, and full measure in Divine things. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." How do you like that? I like the whole verse. I love God's declarations in covenant before the worlds were framed, and I love His declarations in communication and communion by the power of the Holy Ghost in my heart. "*They shall* come to Me; and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." Why, see how forgetful you have been since last Sunday! How much do you remember of last Sunday's sermon? How can you hope to be kept? says Satan. Ay, says the Master, I will tell you that again, and the Covenant Remembrancer "shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Yesterday we were washed from our filthiness, and yet we come to-day to God's house, and to mingle with His saints. Why look! The law of Moses declares we are as filthy as ever, as corrupt as ever. Mark you, I do not wish to make use of language which will offend polite ears; but I must say, as stinking as ever; that is a Scriptural word. How can we expect a word of love, a look of recognition? O, he says, "I will in no wise cast out." O my dear friends, proud professors may talk as much as they like about my raking up corruption; but if it is raked up to the service of God's Word, by God the ever-blessed Spirit, it is all right. What about our old friend Rahab? Some persons may be so very precise as to walk more consistently than the dear old dame; but let me walk with her. What about the poor Adullamites discontented and in distress? I ask again, What about poor Peter, as he cursed, he swore, he lied? What about these? The covenant declaration had gone forth, "they

shall come," and come they did again and again. Have you and I come? Peter says, "to whom coming." O I do love that; though we *have* come, yet mark you, it is still "coming" all through our spiritual history here below. Did you come last Sunday? Did you come yester-morn? Did you come yester-night? O, my dear friends, as the elected and the redeemed of God, you are coming still, and you cannot help yourselves. You are coming by a spiritual and a special anxiety wrought in your hearts by the Holy Ghost; you are coming as new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the Word of Divine consolations to a full-breasted God, a God of many paps, He who alone can minister to your anxieties and can communicate to you that strength which your spiritual weakness yearns and longs for. But mark you—

III.—THE PROGRESS—"Come." "*They shall come.*" You know how I like that word "*come.*" It is vastly better than the word "*go,*" as I have told you many times, and perhaps I shall tell you many times more if the Lord spares me amongst you. That word "*come*" is a mark and evidence of Gospel grace and Gospel communication to us. "*Go*" ever characterises the law. "*Go work in My vineyard. I will.*" But he did not. "*Go work in My vineyard. I will not.*" But he did. You see hesitancy and weakness in both cases. But look at the word "*come*" throughout God's Word. Noah builds his ark, and God says, "Come thou into the ark." He does not say "*Go* in there, it is ready, and you have the opportunity to go in if you will." Why, my dear friends, I think I see our covenant God, our loving Father, coming and taking poor old Noah by the hand, ay, I see Him taking him by the heart, and saying, "Come along," and He takes him in, He goes in with him. So it is with His children now. Where He goes they go. These elect, redeemed, and regenerate ones, according to the Olney poet, go where He goes, and come where He comes. Look at that precious hymn which says,—

"Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
And ev'ry place is hallow'd ground.
For Thou within no walls confin'd,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring Thee where they come,
And going, take Thee to their home."

Ah, my dear friends, this makes a spiritual radical of a man when he understands his high position in union with a precious Christ, and it is only where a covenant God in Christ is pleased to reveal Himself in all His loveliness, grace, glory, and grandeur that the eagles who love the blood of the covenant are found where the carcase of the covenant is, and there they feed readily upon the provision which He Himself has provided.

"They shall come." Look again, *"Come unto Me."* It is not go and do this, that, and the other, and when you have prepared yourselves for the sacrament I will receive you. You know there are some persons in creation, who, when their table is about to be spread, get a lot of the youngsters and profess to prepare them. When a person knows himself as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, he will find all religious appliances to fail him, and all his preparation is in God, with God, and by God. Look at Isaiah i. 18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Come to the New Testament, and you see the same, "Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come," to a precious Christ; "And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But look at the grand finale, when the great white throne is set up, and the great King-Priest takes His place, when the line of demarcation is made plain between elect sheep and reprobate goats: to those on His right hand He will say, "Come, ye blessed of the Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

IV.—THE CHARACTERISTIC—"With weeping." "They shall come with weeping." Did you ever know a living child of God with whom you were privileged to hold sweet, blessed, and hallowed spiritual communion, without tears? Do you know him? Well, you may; but I should not like to be found in the company of such a character very often. I should not ring at his bell, or knock at his door, and I should not try to meet him in the same street very often. I do not want those characters; and, mark you, I am not speaking with fleshly cant and sentimentality here, for, I daresay, if there is a mortal in creation who hates anything of that kind, I am the man. But if God has wrought these things in me, I cannot resist or gainsay them. I know that ofttimes by the power of His grace He works such a melting in my heart, in union with the Receiver of sinners, with the Friend of publicans and sinners, with His poor, tried, and tempted children in the wilderness, that I gladly turn my head any way, and I go into a secret corner, and there weep out my soul before Him. O my dear friends, refreshing tears of God's own giving are highly to be prized. They are not signs of spiritual weakness, but of spiritual strength. If a precious Jesus could weep by the grave of Lazarus, not over Lazarus, but in blessed and hallowed sympathy with Mary and Martha and their spiritual friends, I am confident that the redeemed and regenerate sinner in spiritual oneness with Him will not find himself lacking those tears which God Himself so graciously bestows, and with which He moistens the eyes of His truly forgiven, His spiritually accepted ones at the throne of grace. Look at those who are represented as weeping throughout God's

blessed Word. Look at Jacob. Ah! my dear friends, as he looked upon his darling Rachel for the first time, the tears of natural and spiritual affection were not wanting (see Gen. xxix. 11). Poor old Jacob! I do thank God that I feel both naturally and spiritually with him oftentimes. Look at him! how he could weep and cry at the very thought of his being bereft of his children; and think of dear old Job according to that glorious twenty-ninth chapter of his, when he says, "When my children were about me." You who have children, and you can see them under your roof, warm and snug under the blankets and sheets of your own providing, think for a moment what would be your thoughts, your feelings, if one or two of them were in spots you knew not where? What would be your thoughts if God took away the desire of your eyes with a stroke? Where would you be? Will you tell me that tears flowing with the experience of these things are signs of weakness? I want none of your strength, I would sooner be weak. I would not be the stoic who can look upon suffering humanity, and the changes which JEHOVAH works in families with indifference. Look again at Moses. Oftentimes when I was a lad I used to wander in spirit to have a peep at the little fellow as he lay in his ark of bulrushes. We are told in Exod. ii. 6, "Behold, the babe wept." And you may depend upon it, he did not cease his weeping with that ark of bulrushes. He wept, and wept, and wept again. He "choose rather to suffer affliction with the children of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Do you want further manifestations of this weeping? Look at Paul. He said to the Ephesian elders, "I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts xx. 31); and as he was about to leave them, "he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him. Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." But I want you to notice still farther our old friend Peter. How do you like him? He denied his Lord and his Master. Did not know Him. He swore and he cursed. A gracious Jesus turned and He looked upon Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 75). And so have I, and I do yet, and could sit and weep at the feet of a dear Redeemer, and I do know—though sometimes I feel that I know nothing—I do know what that means,—

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by His goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

"*They shall come with weeping.*" Are there any weeping ones here? O my poor, tried, broken-hearted, weeping ones, do not run away from the Lord's table because you think you are not worthy. Do not turn away from it, for if you do, I should be tempted to run away from it, and to leave it for ever.

May the Lord add His blessing.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

PRECIOUS PROMISES PLEADED AND PERFORMED.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, NEW ENGLAND ROAD, BRIGHTON,
ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 7TH, 1880, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 37.

THE words I have read as my text appear in the midst of a profusion of exceeding great and precious promises given by the great and glorious JEHOVAH to His own Israel. This is Israel, not after the flesh, but after the spirit, as we saw from several portions of God's most Holy Word the last time it was my privilege to open my mouth in this place in the name of the Lord, for His glory, the exaltation of His Christ, the honour of His Spirit, and the instruction, comfort, and edification of His gathered ones. His promises are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. i. 20), and this Yea and Amen is sweetly illustrated to my mind by the saying of an illiterate old Lancashire woman concerning God's salvation: "*Right and square at both ends.*" They were perfect in eternity past in the counsel, covenant, plan, and purpose of JEHOVAH. They will be perfect in eternity to come in the unceasing bliss and blessedness of all those interested therein. If we wish for a clearer view of these precious words, we may look at the "Yea" as the Father's promise of life, love, light, and liberty in Christ Jesus before the world began, and the "Amen" is the performance of the promise in the heart's experience of every regenerate child in His family. God's "Yea" may be taken as His infallible prediction of all that should come to pass in the spiritual experience and eternal glorification of "His own elect." His "Amen" He acknowledges in the cry, the desire, the groaning, and the longing for the fulfilment of the same in living souls. All His promises are sure and certain to all who are in Christ Jesus by

eternal decree and spiritual regeneration. All found in Him are participators in His new covenant blessings secured by the Father in Him, and communicated by the grace and indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit. It is a marvellous mercy to be led by the Spirit into the understanding and enjoyment of these exceeding great and precious promises. Mark well a few of those I have read in this chapter for our profit and instruction.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you." Here we may ask, What is this clean water? What is this sprinkling? What is this cleansing? Natural, consecrated, or ceremonial water has no place here. The Ritualist and Ceremonialist have no part or lot in the glorious truths couched beneath these metaphors. This water is spiritual, life-giving, soul-cleansing, spirit-reviving. It flows from the throne of Divine glory, as described in Ezekiel xlvii. 1—12, and Rev. xxii. 1; also beautifully expressed in the words of dear old John Kent:—

"Beneath the sacred throne of God
I saw a river rise,
The streams were peace and pard'ning blood,
Descending from the skies.
Angelic minds cannot explore
This deep unfathom'd sea;
'Tis void of bottom, brim, or shore,
And lost in Deity."

See how sweetly he expresses this in another hymn:—

"Water from salvation's wells,
Thirsty sinner, come and draw;
Grace in Jesus' fulness dwells,
More than men or angels know.
'Twas in God the Fount supreme,
Till the day that Adam fell;
Then the first all-healing stream
Water'd Eden's garden well.
Far and wide the healing flood
O'er the sin-curs'd garden ran,
Preaching peace by Jesus' blood—
Blissful sound to rebel man.
Thousands now around the throne
Water from this Fountain drew;
Felt their griefs and sorrows gone;
Hymn'd His praise, and why not you?
Bring no money, price, or aught,
No good deeds, nor pleasing frames,
Mercy never can be bought;
Grace is free; and all's the Lamb's."

That is the water of eternal life and love; the glorious river of sovereign and irresistible grace, the streams whereof make glad the city of God (Psalm xlv. 4). This is the water by which the Holy Ghost is pleased to set forth the constraining power of Christ's love (2 Cor. v. 14). It flows through purpose, promise, and performance from the eternal throne, and bears on

its bosom all the election of grace to that glory which He has prepared. This is the water of which Moses speaks in Deut. xxxii. 2: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew." This is the water of God's covenant truth descending in showers of spiritual blessing in His season to refresh His tried and tempted ones in the midst of their wilderness wandering and weariness. Mark well the active person in this gracious work:—

"*Then will I.*" JEHOVAH Himself. Not by deputy or delegate. By a right understanding of this in the fear of the LORD, He is pleased to lay low every idea of priest-craft and parson-craft. It brings a man to know that God can work without him in the communication of His truth to the souls of His people. For me to think myself necessary for this would be rash presumption. Long ago the Lord laid me low at His feet as a passive instrument for the conveyance of His truth, and for the manifestation of Himself as a sin-hating and sinner-accepting God. If Divine life is found in the heart of a poor sinner, none can have put it there but God Himself. You will see this from John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There we see the same water, there we see the same power by which life is imparted and love is communicated. We cannot enter intelligently and experimentally into the mysteries of the kingdom of God only as we are begotten of the Father, quickened by the Son, born of the Spirit, and taught by the glorious Three-in-One. All our knowledge of this Book without the teaching of the Spirit will profit us no more than will the knowledge of heathen mythology. It is only as I am led by the Spirit into the deep couching beneath the letter of the written Word, as JEHOVAH'S glorious truth enters into my heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, as God-wrought faith is mixed with God-communicated knowledge, that I know my standing before my God in the person of His dear Son, and enjoy the preciousness of His promise: "*Ye shall be clean.*" Our God does His work perfectly. When He washes His child, every stain of sin, every spot of filth, every trace of defilement is removed. Our Lord taught His disciples this truth. See John xv. 3: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." But if you will turn to John xiii. 10, you will read, "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all." All the spiritually-washed disciples were clean, but all the washing in the world would not cleanse the filthy Judas. In a subsequent verse we are told that Judas went out: "and it was night." Ay, it was night in more senses than one. The Lord Jesus was thus left with His own eternally-loved ones; He could breathe freely, and said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Not

an Egyptian, Amalekite, Philistine, or Babylonian was there, and our Lord could say to all: "Now ye are clean." All this was in perfect accordance with the Father's promise made to Him, and for all His people in Him. Am I clean in His sacred and solemn presence this morning? If I am occupied with myself, I am anything but clean; I am unclean, for the revelation of the purity and perfections of my God discovers the sin abounding in me, and I am perplexed. But when I am occupied with my glorious Head and see myself in Him, my heart bounds with spiritual joy with the knowledge of my acceptance in the Beloved—in all that He is in the eye and heart of the Father—perfect in Christ Jesus—complete in Him. In Christ Jesus no condemnation; in Christ Jesus free from all sin (Rom. vi. 22, viii. 1). Well might Catesby Paget sing:—

"Temptation and conflict oft cause us to groan,
Oh, how strong is the evil within!
But justified freely through grace in the Son,
Though sinning, we're free from all sin."

We are sinning every moment in our old nature. We are free from sinning in the new. With my old nature He will deal in judgment and have no mercy. With my new nature He will deal in love, and know no condemnation. In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy to His redeemed ones, though He will judge their corrupt, vile nature which cannot be mended or improved, neither can it be worse than it is, being unmixed and unmitigated evil. Yet, according to my feelings, it grows worse day by day. To hold a little communion with my God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is a wonder of wonders to me, and as I contemplate the depravity of my nature, I cry,

"Can ever God dwell here?"

But, Oh! marvellous mercy! By the application of my Saviour's blood, by the communication of my Father's love, by the sprinkling of the water of life upon me, I enjoy His cleansing from all filthiness, and His purging from all idolatry. Notice the exact language of the promise—it is not "I have cleansed you," but, "*I will cleanse you.*" I love to look at the phraseology in which God has been pleased to communicate His mind and will to His people, and in watching this, many difficulties are cleared from the minds of God's exercised children. Look at 1 John i. 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." This verse is often read as though the cleansing was a thing of the past; but the Holy Ghost speaks of it as a present reality in the experience of the people of God, as they journey through the wilderness. It is a daily cleansing from the filthiness and idolatry of the daily walk. Mark! it is from *all* sin, not *some*. It matters not what the nature or appearance of the cleansed one's sin may be, it is all gone when the Holy Ghost applies the blood of sprinkling. The sin of the

profligate or pietist, the irreligious or religious, must all be washed in atoning blood, or the unwashed sinner must perish in his sin. According to my conviction, religious sin is the most hateful in the eyes of infinite Purity. I gather this from the saying of our Lord to the chief priests and elders as recorded in Matt. xxi. 31: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." And here I can testify that if the Lord were to deal with my hearers according to the sin, pride, and conceit of my fleshly nature, He would swamp the whole congregation: and this teaches me that I must take all my words, works, and ways to Him, saying, Lord, wash me and all mine in Thy most precious blood. Do I breathe a suppliant prayer at His sacred footstool? It needs to be purified with His blood, and perfumed with the sweet incense of His intercession. Do I sing His praise? There is in it so much of fleshly gratification that it must be washed in His all-cleansing blood. Blessed be His holy name, He has promised to do it.

"From all your idols will I cleanse you." Are there any idolaters here? Yes, there is one in the pulpit. While we are in the flesh we shall never be wholly rid of idols. It is wonderful the number of household gods we have, and are unconscious of the possession of them until JEHOVAH, by His stripping process, makes a speedy riddance of them. Wife, children, and pets in favoured corners of the house, but God will purge us of all. See Gen. xxxv. 1, 2: "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments." Does not that seem strange? God's Jacob, God's Israel, who could look up and say, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17), yet allowing strange gods to defile his house. Ah, say some, if he had had the fear of God in his heart, he would not have allowed such a state of things. But he *had* the fear of God in his heart, and he *did* allow them. He was a dear child of God, yet he did things, and allowed things to be done, utterly inconsistent with his calling, and contrary to God's express commands. God, in the riches of His grace, brought him out of that state, and by the power of His own long, strong arm of love He will bring all His children out of like states and conditions, purge away their dross, take away their tin, cleanse them from their idols, bring them to the footstool of sovereign mercy to confess that they belong to Him and to none other, that they are His and were not made for another.

"A new heart also will I give you." Do you notice that singular noun, "*heart*," not *hearts*. Here we see a physio-

logical fact—one heart for one body, as one head is sufficient for one body. A body with two heads would be a monster. There are no monstrosities in JEHOVAH'S spiritual kingdom. "His work is perfect." To the mystical body of Christ there is but one Head, and in that body there is but one Heart. I thank God that my mind was led when young to learn and notice well these precious words, "O Almighty God, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord." Christ, our Head up yonder, is the seat of all the wisdom in the body. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). From that Head flow all the acceptable thoughts which pass through the living members of His body, the Church, by the gracious power of His Spirit. We have not had one thought of love Divine in our heart to-day but what came from Him. Our glorious Head is the source of all spiritual and heavenly motions. He moves, leads, guides, and directs all His mystic members. The natural eyes are in the head. His eyes, His wisdom, will do for me. But I am very much like Moses, who, though the Lord had promised to go before him and with him, to guide and direct him, yet he wanted to persuade Hobab to go with him and Israel, saying, "And thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" (Num. x. 31). God's eyes were not then sufficient according to his judgment. And when Israel was about to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land, instead of depending upon the Lord for guidance, they trusted to the eyes of the twelve spies, and relied upon the report these brought back with them of the land. The news of the giants and walled cities distressed them. And so it is when I manœuvre, scheme, plan, or trust to my own knowledge, or rest in my own understanding, I am sure to meet with dangers and difficulties which I cannot overcome, and be filled with care, anxiety, and perplexity. God's eyes are sufficient for me, and those are in my Head, Christ. He who is my Head in glory is also my own Dear-Heart by the grace and indwelling of His Spirit. Here I would have you notice the covenant promise in Jer. xxxii. 39: "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever." Mark, one heart, not two. This reminds me of John xiv. 1: "Let not *your heart* be troubled." Many persons—one heart. Our gracious Lord did not speak thus in the 13th chapter, when Judas was present; but when Judas was gone out, He could speak thus freely to His sorrowing disciples. I like that. I love to be brought into association with company all of a piece.

"As members of His mystic frame,
Together met, to bless His name;
While humbly at His feet we bow,
As God with us, He's present now."

At such seasons there is no sound of fleshly free-will to mar the

spiritual harmony, nor to call into question the sovereign prerogative of the Spirit to do as He will in the gatherings of the saints. I glory in the spirit of the words of the Shunamite woman, "I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings iv. 13). I love to be found among JEHOVAH'S eternally loved people, elect by the sovereign decree of the Father, redeemed by the blood of the Son, regenerate by the grace of the Spirit, and preserved by covenant power. And I love that experience breathed in the language of Acts iv. 23: "And being let go they went to their own company." When the dear child of God is let go by the sovereign command of Christ, he hastens with spiritual joy to the company of those who love to put every crown upon the head of Him to whom alone it is due. I rejoice to know that all the religion I have is in my glorious Head. I cannot boast of anything I can keep in experimental possession. I know by experience and the teaching of the written Word, that if I boast of anything I possess, I am sure to be stripped. My all is in Him, and He has promised to minister to my necessity in the time appointed, which brings me to His feet, clothed and in my right mind. That is a precious Scripture in Luke xxiv. 32. The Lord Jesus, on resurrection ground, sought the company, not of the great or the grand who could boast of the strength of their faith, but, of two doubting, fearing, unbelieving disciples. He overtook the weary travellers to Emmaus, and while He expounded to them His Father's mind and will, their bosoms heaved with sweet delight. When He vanished from their sight, they said one to another, "Did not *our heart* burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Nothing produces spiritual heart-burning, heart-bounding, and heart-bubbling so much as the truth and love of God communicated from the heart and lips of a precious Christ.

But time would fail me to go through all these precious promises. Look at the 30th verse: "And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen." The fruit of the Tree of Life, under which the child of God loves to rest, shall be multiplied in heartfelt experience. The field of covenant favour which the Lord has blessed shall yield its increase, and fruits of righteousness shall abound by Jesus Christ. Oh! what gracious dealings! Yet all His dealings are not sweet.

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie;
Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Unmeasurably high."

Ofttimes as my Saviour-God is exalted in my spiritual affections, the deeper I am made to descend in the sense of my utter unworthiness. The more I am blessed with the enjoyment of the presence of my Lord, the more I mourn His absence from

me. If I am privileged to rest upon the bosom of everlasting love, I know also what it is to be tossed with tempest upon a sea of doubts and fears, questioning my part or lot in the matter of His grace, while He alone can settle the question. After the sweets of the 30th verse, come the bitters of the 31st: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." Think of that. Marvellous and terrible truths to which I can set my seal before my God, for oftentimes with the burden of an accusing memory I am forced to cry out, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Psa. xxv. 7). O, my dear friends, the remembrance of former sins and abominations take all the conceit out of me, and bow me down before the footstool of sovereign mercy. When I look at my children and see their sins and infirmities, something whispers to me, "From whence do they derive them?" I answer at once, "Lord, they derive them all from me; they have not a sin, folly, failure, or mistake but what was first in me." This brings me with a melting heart and weeping eyes before Him for them. "*Ye shall loathe yourselves.*" Prudence forbids my entering fully into this humbling metaphor. It means that we spiritually cast ourselves out of our own consideration. What can be so ugly and hateful as wretched self when seen in the light of the perfection and beauty of Jesus? This experience is very profitable, but anything than pleasant. After this statement of new covenant promises, He says,

"*Not for your sakes do I this.*" This makes a clean sweep out of all that springs from the creature. Have you not noticed the Lord's reasons for dealing in grace with His people? See! "For Mine own sake" (Isaiah xliii. 25); "For My name's sake" (Psalm cvi. 8); "For My holy name's sake" (Ezekiel xxxvi. 22); "For Abraham's sake" (Gen. xxvi. 24). This is to stain the pride of the creature and to stop all vain boasting. If any of His children have respect to me, it is not because of anything of my own, but it is because of His work in me—His Christ seen in my experience—His Spirit's gracious work—Himself, the one object of my spiritual affection. Why can any child of God love me? Only because I stand as a man in Christ, and He makes me ready at His command to minister to the necessities of His own wherever they are found, irrespective of outward distinction. He graciously reveals these things when He comes with power into a sinner's heart. "*Not for your sakes do I this,*" yet for My great name's sake you shall be instructed in the ways of My covenant. These are the ways which refresh and comfort the tried and exercised children of God, and these alone. What is all we possess religiously, devotionally, experimentally, and practically if not spoken home to our heart by the Spirit of Christ? What is all the religion worth that we can hold together by our natural memory? Nothing at all.

“ Though God's *election* is a truth,
 Small comfort there I see,
 Till I am told by God's own mouth
 That He has chosen *me*.”

I must have it from His own mouth. Dry doctrines and fanciful theories will never satisfy living children : but living truth must be made to them a sweet, savoury, solemn reality by the Holy Ghost, a part of themselves by which they rejoice before Him now at times, and one day they will praise Him at home for His grace in choosing them, and making them thus His own. For all things that we have and hold spiritually we love a “ Thus saith the Lord God.” Look at this in the text,

“ *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.*” What a mercy it is to be brought into face to face communion with the God we adore, and to know that He cannot see a spot in us, though the cry of our soul is, “ I am black !” He gives us one object to delight in, even His Christ, His own Elect, in whom His soul delighteth and He is everlastingly well pleased. He gives us one heart in which He creates desires and longings for fellowship and intercourse with Himself. I esteem it a marvellous mercy when I am favoured with a spirit of prayer to breathe out my sorrows and necessities before Him. What is prayer ?

“ Prayer is the breath of God in man
 Returning whence it came :
 Love is the sacred fire within,
 And prayer the rising flame.”

“ Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
 Uttered or unexpressed ;
 The motion of a hidden fire,
 That trembles in the breast.”

It is the desire of the babe not yet arrived at the age of consciousness, for the sincere milk of the Word from the breasts of Divine consolation, or, according to His Word, consolation flowing from a God full-breasted—a God more ready to give than we are to desire. That is the God I love to worship and adore. Prayer is the breathing of a spiritual captive from the prison house of doubt, fear, and self-despair. “ Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee ; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die ” (Psalm lxxix. 11). Prayer is even a desire to fear the name of a sin-forgiving God. See Nehemiah i. 11 ; ay, even the thought upon His name (Mal. iii. 16). Many a timid child of God thinks it to be an unwarrantable presumption for him to take JEHOVAH'S holy name upon his lips. Yet a loving Father has condescended to give such low evidences of spiritual life as a breath, a sigh, a desire, a thought !

“ Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
 'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek.
 His Spirit will cherish the life He first gave ;
 You never shall perish if Jesus can save.”

"*I will yet for this be enquired of.*" Where? Turn with me to Psalm xxvii. 4: "One *thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, *and to enquire in His temple.*" Notice the first sentence of this verse: "One *thing* have I desired of the Lord." The word "*thing*" is in italics, so the portion should read thus: "One have I desired of the Lord." That One is the glorious person whom we worship and adore. We came here desiring His presence to-day. Surely none of you came simply to listen to the voice of a mortal man. Did you not come desiring to see Jesus with the eyes of God-wrought faith and spiritual love? I know the cry of some of your anxious spirits is in harmony with His as described in Solomon's Song ii. 14: "Let me see Thy countenance, let me hear Thy voice; for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely." This is blessedly set forth in the case of Asaph, as recorded in Psalm lxxiii. 25: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Christ alone is the One whom our souls desire, and we love to dwell in His house, behold His beauty, and enquire in His temple. Where is His house? Where is His temple? The Papist will point to his mass-house—the Anglican to his parish church—and the Dissenter to his chapel; but the living child of God is led vastly higher than these low, earthly, sensual, fleeting spots. God's temple is His people (2 Cor. vi. 16). God's house is wherever He pleases to reveal Himself to His elect and redeemed ones. Under the open canopy of heaven Jacob could say, "This is none other but the house of God" (Gen. xxviii. 17). Paul writing to the Hebrews said: "Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we" (chap. iii. 6). Look at 1 Peter ii. 5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." In Psalm xxix. 9, we read of this temple again. "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve," or, as you read in the margin, "*to be in pain.*" Who are these hinds? They are the spiritual Naphtalies let loose in the ranges of covenant favour (Gen. xlix. 21), who have experienced the pains of the new birth and are only satisfied with covenant favour (Deut. xxxii. 23). "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory." See the marginal rendering: "*in His temple every whit of it uttereth His glory.*" In every part of His spiritual temple JEHOVAH will be glorified. However mean, lowly, or uncomely any stone therein may be to human eyes, it will utter His glory and seek not its own. In this temple, and among this people, God will be enquired of to do for His covenant people.

Spiritual and anxious enquirers find a lively representation of themselves in the case of Rebekah, as recorded in Genesis xxv.

22: "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord." Do we not see here a figure of the two natures struggling for the mastery in the experience of a true-born child of God? "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). The world against the Father—the devil against Christ—the flesh against the Spirit—all experienced by the living children, and when they are taught the evil of them in their wretched natures they cannot stifle the cry,

"Can ever God dwell here?"

Ofttimes I sigh, If I am a child of God and a partaker of His life, light, and love, how is it that my mind seems filled with death, darkness, and enmity? But mark: "*She went to enquire of the Lord.*" This was the very best thing she could do. It was according to His covenant promise, "*I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel.*" Mark the next words, omitting the italics,

"*To do for them.*" Not to do "*it,*" but everything. To send the Spirit who creates the desires, inspires the petitions for the performance of those things which none but God can do. I want a fuller and deeper enjoyment of His love. My yearning spirit cries unto Him,

"More of Thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of Thine image let me bear:
Erect Thy throne within my heart,
And reign without a rival there."

Gracious Lord, Father, Saviour, Comforter; bring me into closer association and communion with Thyself. As I realise my filthiness, I cry unto my Saviour and Cleanser in the language of Toplady's matchless hymn,

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to THYSELF I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly:
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

I am fully conscious that I need cleansing in my person, prayers, praises, preachings, ay, in everything I do, and in the sweet words of Charles Wesley I cry,

"Wash me, and make me thus Thine own—
Wash me, and mine Thou art;
Wash me, but not my feet alone,
My head—my hands—my heart."

But I find myself a naked sinner before Him. He has stripped me, and my prayer is for Him to clothe me. He gives me to know that He does clothe me, and causes me to sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God;

for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah lxi. 10). Oft-times I hunger and thirst after Him. It is a mercy to be blessed with a keen appetite, though for the time there may be nothing to feed upon. It is one of my Lord's means to bring me to His board, to hear His voice, saying, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song of Solomon v. 1). Deep draughts of the good old generous wine of the covenant are truly reviving to the souls of fainting saints. When I waver and wander, I cry unto Him for guidance, and blessed be His name, His covenant promise holds good. "The Lord shall guide thee continually" (Isaiah lviii. 11). This reminds me of the two precious portions we had at the Grove last Sunday. "Thou shalt bring them in" (Exodus xv. 17), and, "They shall come with weeping" (Jer. xxxi. 9). A Christian without tears would be an oddity indeed. Tears of His giving are relieving and refreshing, and He will own them in that glorious day when He reckons up His jewels, saying unto them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). Up to the heights of glory He will continue to do for His own, and will teach them the preciousness of these words, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17).

H Y M N.

LET me be with Thee where Thou art,
 My Saviour, my eternal Rest;
 Then only will this longing heart
 Be fully and for ever blest.

Let me be with Thee where Thou art,
 Thine unveiled glory to behold;
 Then only will this wandering heart
 Cease to be false to Thee, and cold.

Let me be with Thee where Thou art,
 Where spotless saints Thy name adore;
 Then only will this sinful heart
 Be evil and defiled no more.

Let me be with Thee where Thou art,
 Where none can die, where none remove:
 There death nor life my soul shall part
 From Thy blest presence and Thy love.

C. ELLIOTT.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,
APRIL 25TH, 1880, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”—1 Peter ii. 11.

MY text commences with a term of spiritual endearment and affectionate importunity, followed by a clear and unmistakable description of all those in spiritual and vital union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we have an exhortation based upon the relationship expressed in the term of spiritual endearment, and lastly a declaration setting forth that spiritual conflict ever raging in the experience of all those whom JEHOVAH by His rich and sovereign grace separates to Himself, and distinguishes for Himself. The writings of the Apostle Peter reveal in their arrangement and design a trinity of truth, reminding us of that great and glorious Being whom he loved to worship and adore. God's truth is set forth in *doctrine, experience, and practice*. *Doctrine* is God's teaching from above. *Experience* is His teaching within. *Practice* is His teaching in outward demonstration. As in Godhead there are three distinct and coequal persons, so in the revelation of the truth concerning them there are three distinct and perfect branches. Without *doctrine* or Divine teaching, we can know nothing of Him whose presence and perfections are our delight. I do not mean a cold creed; neither do I refer to a mere form of sound words; but to that spiritual knowledge imparted to spiritual minds by God the Holy Ghost, and found throughout the whole of the inspired Word. Wherever this knowledge is communicated a spiritual experience is produced, which causes the possessor at times to rejoice in the sweet enjoyment of an interest in God's covenant mercy, and at other times to labour with longings, hopes, and desires for a spiritual, intelligent appre-

hension of it. This Divine teaching and inwrought experience ensures a walk and conversation in harmony therewith, and manifest in the outward practice. In making this statement I have no desire to startle the spiritual sensibilities of any tried and tempted child of God in this place. It is not mine to lay down a code of laws, list of rules and regulations, or array of so-called Gospel precepts, whereby you should walk, or by which I should demand from you spiritual obedience. This forms no part of God's testimony through me. I will tell you why. It is because all the laws, rules, regulations, and lines I have marked out for myself to walk in, have only proved my utter failure and incompetency to obey them. Lay before me a code of spiritual laws, and I shall break them; a string of rules, and I shall scatter them; a round of duties, and I shall evade them; directions for my daily walk, and I shall be sure to wander from them; point to the precepts, they will prove me perverse. My God, by His blessed Spirit, has graciously taught me, that of myself I can only sin for Him to save me, transgress, for Him to forgive me; fall, for Him to lift me up; sink into a pit, for His long, strong arm of love to bring me out; mourn, for Him to comfort me; sorrow, for Him to soothe me. Blessed be His holy Name, He continues to do all this for me. I say it in the presence of His sacred Majesty with humiliation and compunction, I have sinned against Him in thought, word, and deed, I have wandered from Him with a will, yet He has followed me with His eye of love, with His arm of power, and with His heart full of unalterable affection. In the face of all my failure, He gives me to know by His blessed Spirit, that He is my kind, compassionate, indulgent Father in Christ Jesus the Son of His love.

You will see the truth of all this in Peter's experience, as stated in his first chapter. He begins by styling himself "*an apostle of Jesus Christ*," addressing scattered strangers who were elect of God, sanctified by the Spirit, sprinkled with the blood, and standing perfect in the obedience of Christ. They were also blessed with the multiplication of grace and peace. In the contemplation and experience of this the apostle could say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This is an outflow of praise and adoring gratitude to the God of all grace for the bestowal of His covenanted mercies. Look at the 4th verse: begotten "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Are we begotten again? Know we ought of the possession of a living hope by the power and teaching of the Spirit? Are the desires of our heart expressed in those words of Paul in Phil. iii. 10, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellow-

ship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death"? Are you born to an inheritance? What are your possessions this morning? Have you broadlands and well-filled exchequers? Think of this: "Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou sit thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. xxiii. 4, 5). But it is not for me, with the little common sense God has given me with His rich grace, to cry down the possession of earthly riches. If God is pleased to send them to me or to others, it is our privilege to bless and praise Him for His distinguishing favour, while we thank Him for His counsel, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psalm lxii. 10). Remember the God of your riches and His goodness in bestowing them. Here I ask, Where are your affections fixed? Thousands are eagerly seeking for place, position, and power in the regions of decay, deterioration, and death, where nothing but vain disquietude can attend them. If you and I are seeking our place at the feet of Jesus, our position in Him, and our power in the grace of His blessed Spirit, we are blessed with good evidences of our being begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us. Mark that! The inheritance is not heaven itself; but it is reserved for us in heaven. God is my inheritance. God is the inheritance of His people, and His people are His inheritance. Concerning all His elect, redeemed, regenerated and worshipping people, He says, "I am their inheritance, I am their possession" (Ezek. xlv. 28). Then come what will, pain, perplexity, temptation, tribulation, disease, or death, all will be well, according to those precious words of John Newton,

"Give me to read my pardon seal'd,
And from Thy joy to draw my strength,
To have Thy boundless love reveal'd
In all its height, and breadth, and length.

Grant these requests, I ask no more,
But to Thy care the rest resign;
Sick, or in health, or rich, or poor,
All shall be well, if Thou art mine."

Thus blessed, where'er I go, whatever be my position, or what the number of my anxieties, doubts, fears, or cares, all is well; but lacking the presence and promise of my God I meet with nothing under the sun but disappointment and discontent. Do you meet with any who are truly satisfied with their lot down here? Not while they take this world and self into account. We have no true contentment but when we are occupied with Him. Then we can look up and with childlike confidence say,

"While place we seek, while place we shun,
We shall find happiness in none;
But with a God to guide our way
'Tis equal joy to go or stay."

Peter tells us that this incorruptible inheritance is for all those "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." This is a precious lesson to learn. Glorious doctrine. Then we have a statement of perplexing but profitable experience: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Hypocrites and mere professors know nothing of this heaviness, temptation and trial, while the true born children of God know full well that through much tribulation the kingdom must be entered. But see! Here we have an expression of loving attachment to that blessed One whom the eye of sense hath never seen, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The eye of faith delights to dwell with fond affection upon the one Object of the heart. From doctrines so glorious, and an experience so precious the apostle proceeds to exhort to gracious practice. Look at verse 13: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." A Holy God had called them by His Holy Spirit, separated them from unholy associations, distinguished them from the unholy mass around them, and now reminds them by His covenant command of their high and holy calling. When the new covenant command comes home with power, you may rest assured that separation from the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil will characterise those whom the Lord commands. The knowledge of their redemption from a carnal and fleshly religion is an incentive to practical separation. The experience of regenerating grace produces abstinence from sinful pleasures. At the commencement of the second chapter we have some precious exhortations to a living people, all flowing from the covenant grace revealed in the first. Look at the second verse: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." There is only the desire for milk experienced by some in the family of God, while others possess the spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1—7). Those who are born again are counselled to lay aside those things which characterise peevish and fretful little children. Then comes a glorious description of the elect of God in experimental oneness with Christ. Look at the 5th

verse: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." These spiritual sacrifices are broken hearts (Psalm li. 17), praise (Heb. xiii. 15), and communicating to the necessities of others (Heb. xiii. 16). All these offered in the name, person, and spirit of Jesus Christ find sweet acceptance with the Father. "*A royal priesthood!*" A glorious declaration of the dignity JEHOVAH has conferred upon all true believers, and comes after the terrible announcement of reprobation given in the 8th verse. Mark well the high calling of God's elect as described in the 9th verse: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light, which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." This brings us to our text, in which we will notice,—

I. The term of spiritual endearment: "Dearly beloved." A blessed, precious privilege only enjoyed through the teaching of the Spirit by those whom He brings into spiritual oneness with the Son of JEHOVAH'S love, to know indeed and in truth that they are bound together in the bonds of spiritual and eternal affection. Here they can use that word, "Beloved," without cant or fleshly sentimentality. I frequently look with suspicion upon those persons who use that word rather freely, and wonder do they really mean what they say. "*Dearly beloved brethren*" sounds forth from every reading-desk in the Establishment; but in numberless cases there is the form without the fact. I love to enter a church where the heart of the minister beats in harmony with Rolleston's. There the words, "*Dearly beloved brethren*," flow from spiritual teaching which none but God can communicate. I thank my God for the manifestation of His mercy to me wherever be the spot, or whatever be the instrument by which He is pleased to display it. He will use whatever instrumentality He pleases to bless His own, and will be restricted to no spot of man's desiring or devising where He will make Himself known to His beloved children. Are we beloved? We are beloved of God or we are not. With all my preaching to you from this pulpit I am either loved or hated of God, and you with all your hearing in those pews are loved by the covenant Three, or you are outside the pale of His grace, and have nothing to do with covenant privileges. Let us ask ourselves the solemn question, Are we spiritual worshippers in JEHOVAH'S temple, presenting spiritual sacrifices sprinkled with covenant blood and ascending with the fire of covenant love, or are we only mere professors? Sometimes I think there is nothing but profession in me. At other times I am favoured with marked demonstrations of God's love and favour toward me concerning which there can be no

mistake. I know then that I am beloved and elected of the Father—beloved and redeemed by the Son—beloved and regenerated by the Holy Ghost. But this is the point for each of us to consider: How do I know that Divine love recognised me in God's sovereign act of election? You can prove the doctrine from the Scriptures, say some. But, my dear friends, that is not enough for me. A mere dry dissertation on election, even when proved from holy Scripture, will not do for me, but would wound and disappoint my spirit. Dry theories on election are sapless morsels for thirsty souls, even when culled from the pages of the Bible. But election love is a grand, eternal, and glorious fact in the mind of JEHOVAH, and a solemn spiritual reality in my heart, as the blessed Spirit separates me from a world of sin death which is consigned to destruction. The knowledge of my election is clearly described in 1 Thes. i. 4, 5: "Knowing, brethren *beloved of God*, your election. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Here we have the same term of endearment, "*brethren beloved of God*," and election love traced up to JEHOVAH, the Fountain of all spiritual blessing to a covenant people. If you will turn with me to Exodus xxxiii. 16, there you will see how elected ones are known and distinguished from the rest: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." God for my Companion, Comforter, and Counsellor, causes me to sing,

"This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend,
Whose love is as great as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end.

"'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home,
We'll praise Him for all that is past
And"—

we will ask Him for grace to

"—trust Him for all that's to come."

Beloved by the Son as revealed in our redemption. It is our mercy to know that we are "accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 6, 7). Are we redeemed by the blood of the Lamb? If so, we are delivered from the power of the world and the flesh, to enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This truth known and felt makes a clean sweep of all creature effort and fleshly religious endeavours. See 1 Peter i. 18, 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your

fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” This is a redemption from an outside and fleshly religion, as well as from an irreligious state and condition; from that filthy piety of which many of Satan’s brood are so proud, and from profligacy into which many of God’s children wander far until arrested by the arm of His sovereign love and power.

Beloved by the Spirit as experienced in regeneration. What know we of this? Were I to judge of the love of the Divine Three according to sense and reason by way of comparison, I should conclude that the love of the Spirit far transcends the love of the Father and the Son. But I know that this is not so.

“In *the Trinity* none is afore or after other: none is greater or less than another.” In the love revealed by the glorious Three-in-One, we behold co-equality and co-eternity. The Father’s love to His elect children cannot surpass the love of the Son to His redeemed bride, or that of the Spirit to His regenerate friends. I was saying on Tuesday evening that I love to dwell upon the unselfishness of Deity. It is our blessed privilege to sing with the Spirit, “Glory be to the Father,” for the Father will not glorify Himself. “Glory be to the Son,” for the Son will not seek His own glory. “Glory be to the Holy Ghost,” for He will not witness concerning Himself. The Father delights to glorify the Son and the Spirit. The Son delights to glorify the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit delights to glorify the Father and the Son. It is our delightful privilege by the grace and indwelling of the Holy Ghost to sing, “Glory be to the Eternal Three-in-One JEHOVAH.” My soul revels with delight in that precious hymn of Mushett’s:—

“More of Thy love, my God, I find
In every hour I live;
More of Thy peace, in heart and mind,
Doth each sharp trial give.

“Up to my Father’s high decree
Each act in time I trace;
Up to the glorious Sovereign Three—
Almighty Fount of grace.”

So it is, the elect, redeemed, and regenerate people of God are beloved of Father, Son, and Spirit. The Apostle John, who speaks of love more than any other of the inspired writers, says, “Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him” (1 John v. i). Oh, you may depend upon it, Divine love is a mighty leveller. It levels the elect sinner down to the dust, it levels him up to the throne and heart of his God. Love levels in judgment all the election of grace to the dust. Love levels the same to the enjoyment of an unfailing patrimony in the covenant of unchanging grace. Love, like its Author, cannot be hid. In the set time it will manifest itself in preaching (Titus i. 3), in conversation by the hearth, or in

singing some of those precious free-grace hymns bequeathed to the Church by those sweet singers in Israel who are now in glory. When covenant love is thus manifested sectarian differences disappear, denominational distinctions are removed, fleshly lines of demarcation are effaced, walls of partition are broken down, and the living and loving children of God are bound together experimentally and intelligently in the bundle of life with the Lord their God, quickened by His Spirit, warmed by His love, standing in His perfections, and cheered by the hope of His own giving, that at last they shall surround His throne without distinction, all loved with the same love, washed in the same blood, singing the same song, and blessed with the same assurance that they shall never more sin nor go out of His blissful and glorious presence.

“*Dearly beloved!*” Oh, my dear friends, God’s elect are His dearly beloved. So loved by the Father, that He gave His Son for them, and with His Son He freely gave all things to them (Rom. viii. 32). That is a marvellous truth recorded in Isaiah xliii. 3, 4: “For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.* Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, *and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.*” The Lord will sacrifice anything for His children. Ask a mother concerning her child, let the child be twenty days old, or seventy years, what will she sacrifice for it? Why, everything, and risk her life too. JEHOVAH did all that in the person of His Son. Ask a father concerning His children, it matters not whether they be on his own hearth, or one be 10,000 miles away. Let the wanderer be in want and necessity, what can a father feel? Thank God, that brand of reprobation, *without natural affection* (Rom. i. 31), belongs not to me, whatever my infirmities may be. For the Father’s dearly beloved children, a loving Saviour left the heights of glory and descended to His brethren’s doom and death, and endured the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, so that He might allure our hearts to Himself with His looks of love, show us His wounded hands and side, and say unto each of us, “*I suffered all for thee.*” Nothing breaks and melts the heart so effectually as the sight of Incarnate Love suffering for poor dunghill worms. They are the fruit of His fearful soul travail, and He will be satisfied as He sees them drawn out of the world by His blessed Spirit to Himself for presentation to the Father in His glorious perfections. To all such dearly beloved ones the Spirit by Peter says,—

II.—“*I beseech you.*” It is a blessed privilege to live in the good wishes, prayers, entreaties and importunities of those who are drawn by rich and sovereign grace to the footstool of JEHOVAH. I esteem it a high favour to feel that I am one of those whose names are lisped by the dearly beloved sons and

daughters of the Lord Almighty, the brethren of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the companions of the Lord the Spirit, and have been remembered by them this morning with importunity. Oh, what a mercy! A poor, undeserving, unworthy, hell-deserving wretch favoured by the Lord with the mention of his name from the lips of His loved and loving children. Is it possible for them to have this interest in me and for Him not to be interested? Surely not. It is a special favour to be allowed to bear in the arms of love those to whom we are united as heirs together of the grace of life, and where prayer and supplication abounds there must be care, concern, and counsel given to them. But what ground had Peter for beseeching his fellow pilgrims? The same possessed by Paul, as described in Rom. xii. 1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Not by anything possessed by the creature, or that could be wielded by fleshly will or power, but the covenant mercies of a covenant God. If you are in doubt as to the nature of these mercies, let me ask you to trace your way through the preceding eleven chapters, and you will find them to be electing, redeeming, justifying, regenerating, preserving, and glorifying mercies. By these the bodies of the saints are to be presented as living, acceptable sacrifices to God. This leads the mind to the contemplation of the act of priestly consecration as described in Exodus xxix. 20, when the ear, thumb, and great toe were touched with blood. Mark! The ear, that is in the head, denoting the will. My will is not my own, it belongs to Him who bought me with His blood. He has graciously taught me to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." At times I can say with a little melting of heart,—

"Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
Thy will be done."

The thumb, as part of the hand, denotes the work. My work is not my own, but His who redeemed me. This is something more than work in connection with religious societies, it is His work in me at home and abroad, and wherever He is pleased to carry me. The great toe is part of the foot, and denotes my ways. All these belong to Him. I know what that means: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him" (Prov. iii. 6). Ah, say you, my ways are sinful! That is the necessity to acknowledge Him as thy salvation. My ways are often those of felt need. Then acknowledge Him as thy gracious Provider of all thy supplies. My ways are characterised by daily weakness. Then acknowledge Him as thy only strength. And so I might go on at length. How blessed it is to see the children of God truly anxious after each other's welfare. I remember with unfeigned pleasure my dear and now glorified friend, Thomas Robinson, of Barrow Hill, how he would sometimes pin me by the button-

"With feeble light, and half obscure,
 Poor mortals His arrangements view;
 Not knowing that the least are sure,
 And the mysterious just and true."

If our heart's desire is after earthly position, place, or power, we give evidence of the dominion of fleshly lusts over us.

V. "*Which war against the soul.*" Warfare in the experience of the living child of God is a terrible reality. Of him Hart might well sing,—

"When his pardon is sign'd, and his peace is procured,
 From that moment his conflict begins."

Are we pilgrims and strangers upon earth? Worldly affections will certainly harass us. Are we citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem? Fleshly lusts will surely assail us. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that *we* cannot do the things that *we* would" (Gal. v. 17). Why is all this? That we may be shut up to Him who knows how to bring good out of evil, order out of confusion, and teaches His people the preciousness of that truth, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28).

HYMN SUNG BEFORE THE SERMON.

As when the weary traveller gains
 The height of some commanding hill,
 His heart revives, if o'er the plains
 He sees his home, though distant still.

Thus, when the Christian pilgrim views,
 By faith, his mansion in the skies,
 The sight his fainting strength renews,
 And wings his speed to reach the prize.

The thought of home his spirit cheers;
 No more he grieves for troubles past;
 Nor any future trial fears,
 So he may safe arrive at last.

"'Tis there," he says, "I am to dwell
 With Jesus in the realms of day;
 Then shall I bid my cares farewell,
 And He shall wipe my tears away."

Jesus! on Thee our hope depends,
 To lead us on to Thine abode,
 Assured our home will make amends,
 For all our toil while on the road.

JOHN NEWTON.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

DEFENCE.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
SEPTEMBER 23RD, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the LORD before them."—Zech. xii. 8.

THE chapter which I have read for our instruction, and from which I have taken the words of my text, commences with a declaration which can only be understood by those who experience what the burden of the Word of the Lord is. To the Spirit-taught minister of Christ, God's message is oftentimes accompanied with a crushing weight, and feeling of awful responsibility which he is delighted to feel removed to the person of the Messenger of the covenant, the only true Expounder and Expositor of the mind and will of God. The expression, "the burden of the Word of the LORD," is remarkably appropriate to the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Once, and only once, is it recorded of Him that He rejoiced during His sojourn in these lowlands of sorrow and mourning. You will read this in Luke x. 21: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father: and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." This was a declaration of JEHOVAH'S discriminating mercy which roused the ire of Pharisees and formalists, caused the devil to show his great wrath, and his brood to manifest their enmity against the Christ of God. Natural religion would reverse God's order altogether, and declares that Christ's rejoicing would be in the

to help ourselves: keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." There we have the breathing out of the acknowledgment of God's sovereign power in ordering, controlling, and restraining the passions of all opposers and oppressors of His Church and people. He overrules the wills and ways of all those who stand in daily opposition to us, and who employ all their time and means to destroy our peace and usefulness. Blessed be His name for teaching us this precious truth—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psalm lxxvi. 10). Yet, with all His teaching we oftentimes feel His Word to be a burden. Mark well the opening words of the text,—

"In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." What day? This has no reference to a set period of time consisting of twenty-four hours; but to that time set down in the eternal counsels when JEHOVAH would visit His people and vindicate their cause. The history of Israel of old furnishes a succession of types of God's dealings with His spiritual Israel. Lessons in spiritual geography are taught by God the everblessed Spirit to all those whom He brings out from under a greater tyranny than that of Pharaoh—deliverance from the curse and condemnation of the law is experienced; but see! Amalek, a type of the flesh, appears at Rephidim. Battles, conflicts, and encounters are remembered, and can be recounted with painful accuracy. Wilderness warfare is weary work. Canaan is possessed, but the Canaanite is there.

"Troubles of every shape and name
Attend the followers of the Lamb."

Babylon, with its painful captivity, must be known and felt. The world oftentimes holds the spiritual children of God in its iron grasp. But let me direct your attention to the day mentioned in the text. It is the day of the display of JEHOVAH'S judgments and mercies—the day of the Son of man—the Lord's day indeed, and in truth. It is the Lord's day to me when He appears to me as my All-in-all. Turn with me to Psalm cx. 3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." By the rod of His strength, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is His power unto salvation, His own elect, redeemed by precious blood, shall be brought at the set time of favour (Psalm cii. 13) in willing bonds to His sacred feet to know Him as their gracious Deliverer and Defence. See how blessedly this is stated by old John Kent and Brewer,—

"There is a period known to God,
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold and enter in.

"Th' appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by grace ;
Give a new heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill."

That is a precious verse of Brewer's—

" But thus th' eternal counsel ran :
'Almighty love, arrest that man !'
I felt the arrows of distress,
And found I had no hiding-place."

When the time arrives for the manifestation of Divine life and love to God's Israel not all the powers of earth and hell can hinder it. Solomon states this in unmistakable language in Eccles. iii. 1—9: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die." I was not consulted as to the time of my birth, and I am painfully conscious, knowing by bitter experience, that I cannot die when I like. Had this been the case, I say it to my shame, I should have been dead long ago. Elijah knew this when "he requested for himself that he might die: and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life" (1 Kings xix. 4). And poor rebellious Jonah knew the same when "he wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said unto Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jonah iv. 8, 9). Some may start up and object to such conduct on the part of Jonah; but what think they of the bitter cry of Zion's sinless, yet suffering, Redeemer in Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Do you not see a sympathising, suffering Saviour, one with His sorrowing prophet here? I do.

"When vexing thoughts within me rise,
And, sore dismayed, my spirit dies,
Yet He, who once vouchsafed to bear
The sickening anguish of despair,
Will sweetly soothe, will gently dry
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye."

Fleshly perfectionists and proud pietists may fling their scorn at God's Jonahs and Elijahs; but a day is coming when "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision" (Psa. ii. 4). I do love that precious hymn of Ryland's,—

"Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise ;
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.
"His decree who form'd the earth,
Fix'd my first and second birth ;
Parents, native place, and time,
All appointed were by Him.
"Plagues and deaths around me fly ;
Till He bids I cannot die ;
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

God has His own time for the display of His judgments and mercies, and blessed be His name, He will not be hurried, neither will He be hindered. It is instructive to notice the titles by which He is pleased to reveal Himself to His people. According to their necessities and the blessings He communicates to them, so is He pleased to reveal Himself to them. To Abraham in danger He is his Shield. To Abraham in necessity He is his Exceeding Great Reward (Gen. xv. 1). Do distresses and dangers encompass Jerusalem? It is defended by JEHOVAH OF HOSTS. Ah, my dear friends, faith of His giving beholds and bows before the revealed fact that the hosts which came against Jerusalem could only move according to His sovereign will. Have you faith? How does it stand before the awful records we have at hand of the cruel, remorseless, and bloodthirsty doings before Plevna now? There are Christian (?) warriors with the cross on their banners, but with the cruelty of hell in their hearts. From all such *Christian philanthropists* and their aiders and abettors, good Lord deliver me. But is it not a stretch to our faith to believe that not a trigger can be pulled, nor a bullet wing its way with its message of death and destruction, but by the sovereign will and pleasure of the LORD of hosts? Ay, indeed it is. Faith must be shaken to be tried; but faith of God's own giving will only take deeper root through the shaking it receives. Faith of God's planting is a goodly tree rooted in a kindly soil, and storms, tempests, and furious blasts from earth and hell will howl through its branches, to strengthen and not to weaken it. Our God is the Lord of hosts—the Sovereign Lord of all hosts, heavenly, earthly, and infernal—but, better still, He is the Sovereign Lord of all the hosts of blessings, mercies, promises, and privileges with which He enriches and ennobles the precious sons and daughters of Zion who are in His eyes comparable to find gold.

"*The LORD shall defend Jerusalem.*" The Defender is JEHOVAH in His Trinity of Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is a glorious line of defence which can never be broken. The Presence of the Lord is the Defence of His people. We see this from Numbers xiv. 9, where the people are encouraged to enter the Promised Land with the words, "the LORD is with us: fear them not." Nothing short of the presence of God would allay the fears and satisfy the desires of the Psalmist's heart. In the contemplation of his numerous enemies he declared his faith and confidence in his God in these words, which you will find in Psalm vii. 10: "*My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.*" In the time of danger and distress he cried, "Be Thou my strong Rock, for a house of *defence* to save me" (Psa. xxxi. 2). In the enjoyment of Divine security he glories in his God, "But I will sing of Thy power; yea, I will sing of Thy mercy in the morning: for Thou hast been *my Defence* and Refuge in the day

of my trouble. Unto Thee, O my Strength, will I sing; for God is *my Defence*, and the God of my mercy" (Psa. lix. 16, 17). In the enjoyment of the light of JEHOVAH'S countenance, and the joy His saving name inspired, he declared, "For the LORD is *my Defence*: and the Holy One of Israel is our King" (Psa. lxxxix. 18). That is a precious Scripture in Isaiah xxxi. 5: "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it, and passing over He will preserve it." Turn now to Psalm cxxv. 1, 2: "They that trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." In this Scripture we see the failure of all earthly comparisons. The mountains round about Jerusalem formed a natural defence; but they prevented not the successive invasions and sieges which have laid her in ruins and left her a pitiful desolation. Babylonians, Romans, and Saracens have each in turn succeeded in capturing Jerusalem, while the *vile Christian crusader*, with his accursed sign of the cross, has revelled in the blood of the Saracen within her walls. But this Jerusalem in her grandeur and glory is only a type of that which is spiritual and heavenly. Turn with me to Gal. iv. 25, 26: "For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But *Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*" Look at Hebrews xii. 22—for this precious portion I have thanked my God a thousand times: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Come with me to Rev. iii. 12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name." Now turn to Rev. xxi. 2 and 10: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the heavenly Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Ah, my dear friends, this is that which Abraham looked for, "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10). It is that desired by all those who confess by the Spirit's teaching that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, "a better country, that is, a heavenly, wherefore God is not

ashamed to be called their God : for He hath prepared for them a city " (Heb. xi. 16). Sweetly enjoying an interest in these heavenly realities, we can sing,—

" We've no abiding city here,
We seek a city out of sight,
Zion its name—the Lord is there ;
It shines with everlasting light."

We, whose hearts have been taken captive by the heavenly Lover, look with longing eyes to our heavenly home and confess with Paul, " Our citizenship is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself " (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

This is the Jerusalem which JEHOVAH defends. The citizens thereof may, and will oftentimes, fear and quake, but, " God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved ; God shall help her *when the morning appeareth* " (Psa. xlii. 5). Enemies, mortal, spiritual and infernal, will assault and molest the citizens of this no mean city ; but JEHOVAH'S promise will hold good : " For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about and will be the glory in the midst of her " (Zech. ii. 5). The history of the Church of God reveals the fact that earth and hell are combined incessantly against her. In Eden she was assailed by Satan, and though she fell from her high estate of earthly privilege and power, yet her Defender and Deliverer was nigh at hand to save and secure her from eternal destruction. In Egypt, Pharaoh and his oppressing taskmasters, at the instigation of the devil, sought the destruction of the Israel of God. The covenant Defender was not asleep, but with His ever-watchful eye saw Israel's sorrows and sufferings, and with His all-powerful arm of judgment defended them and distressed their oppressors. The angel of the Lord entered the habitation of the Egyptians and slew the firstborn of man and beast, while Israel reposed securely beneath the shelter of the sprinkled blood. Oh, what a precious promise was that to God's oppressed ones : " For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment ; I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are ; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt " (Exodus xii. 12, 13). In all this we have a type of JEHOVAH'S dealings with the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem throughout all time. The blood of the Mediator of the new covenant having been shed, and His life given up for them, all the claims of law and justice are met and answered, all accusers confounded, and all danger removed from the Church and people of God.

"Should conscience accuse us, as oftentimes it may,
Here's blood that shall take its defilement away ;
In Jesus the Saviour, the sinner shall view
A city of refuge and righteousness too."

The defence of Jerusalem by JEHOVAH was manifest in the days of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib, King of Assyria, came against it with a huge host. His blasphemous letter startled the Jewish king, who immediately "went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." Isaiah proclaimed the Word of the Lord to Hezekiah, concluding with the words, "For I will defend this city to save it for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake." Now notice God's mode of defence at this time. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred four score and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (2 Kings xix. 34, 35).

"For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he past ;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still."

Our God as the defender of His people is not confined to one angel. Did you not notice that declaration in Heb. xii. 22, "But ye are come to an innumerable company of angels?" Elisha's servant was given to see this glorious fact when he saw the city compassed about with a great host, and he said to Elisha "Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man ; and he saw ; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings vi. 15—17). Well may our God be called the Lord of hosts. All things are at His bidding to defend and deliver His oppressed people. Ay, and bless His holy name, He Himself is ever nigh and ever ready to shield and succour them. See Psalm xxxiv. 7: "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

"Incarnate God! the soul that knows
Thy name's mysterious power,
Shall dwell in undisturbed repose,
Nor fear the trying hour.

"Thy wisdom, faithfulness and love,
To feeble, helpless worms,
A buckler and a refuge prove
From enemies and storms.

"Angels unseen around the saints
Their guardian pinions spread,
To cheer the Spirit when it faints,
And raise the drooping head,

"The angel's Lord Himself is nigh
To them that love His name;
Ready to save them when they cry,
And put their foes to shame.

"Crosses and changes are their lot,
Long as they sojourn here;
But, since their Saviour changes not,
What have His saints to fear?"

"And he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David." The margin reads, "*abject or fallen.*" Precious, soul-reviving truth to the weaklings in the family of God. Feebleness and weakness have ever characterised those to whom JEHOVAH imparts His strength. At the time of Jacob's weariness and weakness he became a prevailer and a prince (Gen. xxxii. 24—28). That is a blessed declaration in Deut. xxxii. 36, "For the LORD shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall be faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah xl. 29—31). The children of God, who are the inhabitants of the spiritual Jerusalem, being taught by the Spirit, know their own feebleness, aye, helplessness, and nothing short of the strength of the spiritual David will do for them. Blessed be God it is theirs. He has devised means, whereby it shall be communicated to them. It is theirs through the obedience, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, their David, the Father's Beloved, and apprehended by the faith of His own giving. For when His covenant commands have gone forth, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not" (Isaiah xxxv. 3, 4), as sure as the commands have been given, the weaklings through Satan's assaults and buffetings must be strengthened. Paul knew this as he so well describes in 2 Cor. xii. 7—10: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." O what a marvellous mercy it is to know that we, though weak in ourselves, are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10). In Christ

we are as Christ before God. His strength is our strength. It was this caused David to sing, "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him" (Psa. xxviii. 7).

"The house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them." This is a most stupendous, glorious, and eternal truth. Without a knowledge of it there can be no true apprehension of the Gospel of the grace of God. Dear old John Kent revelled in it, and that is the reason why I like him so much. Listen!

"Hail sacred union, firm and strong!
How great the grace! how sweet the song!
That rebel worms should ever be
ONE WITH INCARNATE DEITY!"

Mark that! With God! in God! as God! This is the glorious God-Man in whom all the election of grace appear perfect, glorious, complete. Our Jesus is "the mighty God" (Isa. ix. 6): "the only wise God" (1 Tim. i. 17); "the great God" (Titus ii. 13); "Emmanuel, God with us" (Matt. i. 23). And as He, our gracious God and Saviour, is in the eyes and heart of the Father, so are we. Do we believe it? We do when His blessed Spirit works precious faith in us, and presents to our wondering gaze the precious truth, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because AS HE IS SO ARE WE in this world" (1 John iv. 16, 17). The knowledge of this, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, chases away from the mind of the spiritual member of my Lord's body, all doubt, fear, and torment. Oh, the blessedness of knowing that as He is now up yonder, without sin, free from sorrow, beyond judgment, far away from death and hell, *so am I*. Can it be true? God has declared it! Christ has revealed it! The Holy Ghost has applied it! And we thus believe it! Look at these precious facts!

Is He One with the Father? (John x. 30) so are we (John xvii. 22).

Is He a Son? (Matt. iii. 17) so are we (1 John iii. 2).

Is He Heir of God? (Heb. i. 2) so are we (Rom. viii. 17).

Is He Elect? (Isa. xlii. 1) so are we (1 Thes. i. 4).

Is He Beloved of God? (Matt. xvii. 5) so are we (Col. iii. 12).

Is He the Righteousness of God? (1 Cor. i. 30) so are we (2 Cor. v. 21).

Is He Holy? (Heb. vii. 26) so are we (Heb. iii. 1).

Is He risen? (Eph. i. 20) so are we (Eph. ii. 6).

Is He accepted? (Heb. ix. 24) so are we (Eph. i. 6).

Is He a Priest? (Heb. iii. 1) so are we (1 Peter ii. 5).

Is He a King? (1 Tim. vi. 15) so are we (Rev. i. 6).

Is He a Conqueror? (Rev. vi. 2) so are we (Rom. viii. 37).

Is He in Heaven ? (1 Peter iii. 22) so shall we be (John xiv. 3).

“ So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be,
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.

“ So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be ;
The love wherewith He loves the Son,
Such is His love to me.”

The house of David retain their family likeness and characteristics—beautiful, bold, faithful, courageous. The children of God are predestinated, conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29) who is the express image of His person (Heb. i. 3).

“*As the Angel of the LORD.*” This is the ANGEL-JEHOVAH—He is JEHOVAH’S Sent One—the communicating Angel to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 11, 12). The redeeming Angel to Jacob (Gen. xlviii. 15, 16). The preserving and guiding Angel to Israel (Exod. xxiii. 20—23). The defending Angel to Joshua (Joshua v. 13—15). The wrestling Angel to Jacob (Hosea xii. 3—5). The covenant Angel to Malachi (Mal. iii. 1). Marvellous grace is here shown to the saints of God who in themselves are poor worms of the earth ; they shall be like Him, as He is. As the communicating Angel He transforms them in the renewing of their minds ; He redeems them from all evil ; He preserves them in the midst of all dangers ; He guides them in the way of peace ; He defends them from all their enemies, earthly and hellish ; He wrestles with them and imparts to them wrestling, praying spirits ; and, as the Angel of the covenant, He is ever with them to teach them its secret and make them know its hidden and spiritual blessings. “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him* ; for we shall see Him as He is ” (1 John iii. 2).

May He add His blessing. Amen.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“TO WHOM COMING.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
MAY 2ND, 1880, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“To whom coming.”—1 Peter ii. 4.

I NEED scarcely tell you how very precious and blessed that word “Come” is to my spiritual understanding. More than once it has been my lot to show forth the encouraging truth contained in the word “Come” in connection with the declarations JEHOVAH has made of His salvation in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Come” is an evidence and sign of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. It is a characteristic of the love and grace of God revealed in the Gospel, while the word “Go” indicates His power and prerogative as displayed in the law. At His command, “Go,” we are brought to the experience of weakness, want, and failure which characterises all human attempts to appease God’s anger, find out a way of acceptance with Him, and claim the enjoyment of His love and presence. The word “Come” from His gracious lips sets forth the matchless power of JEHOVAH as revealed in His person and performances, as the great and glorious Head of His Church and people. In many portions of God’s Book, the word “Come” appears in the imperative mood, which, as all of you who are acquainted with the English grammar know, consists in entreaty, exhortation, invitation, and command. Great liberty has been taken with this by free-will professors to enunciate their vain notions and false theories of JEHOVAH’S invitations of grace to dead sinners to be received and acted upon by the natural mind, thus bringing dead sinners into the enjoyment of heavenly realities. But those of you whose privilege it is to worship a covenant God in His Trinity of persons within these walls, know full well that invitations,

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entreaties, and commands to perform spiritual acts before God, form no part of the testimony from this pulpit. If you ask my reason for not issuing invitations, I tell you plainly, and without hesitation, it is because I feel my utter inability to act in accordance with such invitations falling from the lips of mortal man. Knowing something of my own weakness, and the impotency of human nature in its attempts to perform any spiritual act, or exercise any spiritual grace, it is not mine to entreat, invite, or persuade, but preach God's Gospel, proclaim His gracious will, declare His doings among the people, and sound out His new covenant commands, which, in this dispensation of grace, are carried home to the hearts of His own elect by the Holy Ghost, giving them to know the truth expressed in the words of dear Dr. Hawker:—

“God's commandings are God's enablings.”

The persons to whom God's commands of grace are issued, and into whose hearts they are conveyed, must obey them, according to the covenant designs and arrangements of that ever-to-be adored JEHOVAH who is “too wise too err, and too good to be unkind.” It is our privilege this evening to look at the precious words of the text, and to notice,—

I.—Its connection—“*To.*”

II.—The Person spoken of—“*Whom.*”

III.—The progress—“*Coming.*”

I.—Its connection: “*To.*” Peter wrote to certain persons whose characters he clearly described. Indeed, the whole Book of God is designed for, and addressed to, God's elect. The epistles are all addressed to a definite class, and belong to none other. The declarations of the written Word are purely spiritual, for a spiritual people possessing a spiritual understanding, and who are blessed with a spiritual Guide, Teacher, and Expositor, who, in expounding the Word, meets the varied necessities, wants, anxieties, and perplexities He has created in the heart's experience of those He is graciously teaching. In the first verse of the first chapter, Peter addresses “*the strangers scattered.*” Every book in the Bible is addressed to the same characters, who are strangers with a covenant God in the earth, and pilgrims on their way to their happy home above. Search through the cities, towns, villages, and hamlets of this sin-blighted world, and you will find God's people, whom He has taken in hand, and weaned from the fashions, pleasures, lusts, frivolities, and carnal joys, to be very few indeed. Look at the Psalmist's confession in Psalm xxxix. 12: “I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” I do love those words “*with Thee,*” for I remember the time of which I can truly sing:—

“I once was a stranger to grace and to God;
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
JEHOVAH-TSIDKENN was nothing to me.”

Now He has been pleased to identify Himself with me in these cold regions of sin and sorrow, I am blessed with a feeling interest in the precious truth of these words—"a stranger with Thee." The people of God down here are strangers in a strange land. Scattered strangers, sprinkled here and there as God's salt which preserves the mass of humanity from putrefaction and destruction. See Matt. v. 13: "Ye are the salt of the earth." These are not only scattered in the earth, but also in their hopes, feelings, and expectations. As they realise their position in the midst of Babylonish confusion and disorder, their heart sinks, and were it not for the upholding power of Divine grace, their faith and hope would be scattered to the winds.

Peter declares these scattered strangers to be "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*" This is a glorious truth. Mark you! they were not elect according to anything the Father foresaw they would be; not according to faith or hope foreseen, for that would have rendered election unnecessary. On such ground there would have been no necessity for sovereign choice and predestination, but God foreknew the utter inability of His people to perform anything wise, good, right, or spiritual in His sight, their perfect impotency to believe the promises of His Word, and their complete helplessness to do anything toward their own salvation. He knew what they would be and do as fallen sinners, for He declares to them: "I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb" (Isaiah xlviii. 8). Left to themselves, they must sink to the hell which their wretched natures prefer to His heaven, and seek the society of devils as more congenial to their taste than the company of Jesus. But He loved them and chose them to Himself to be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation, and to be glorified with Him for ever and ever.

" Chosen to faith and hope,
To purity and love,
To all the life of God,
To all the things above;
Chosen to prove salvation sure;
Chosen to reign for evermore."

Now all this is understood *through the sanctification of the Spirit, and the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*" This precious blood is sprinkled upon all those whom the Spirit brings to mourn over their corruption, vileness, and depravity. In the riches of His grace, the Father has made full provision for the removal of all sin, guilt, and condemnation from His elect by the shedding of the blood of Jesus, which He applies to their heart, conscience, and understanding, thus bringing them into blessed and hallowed communion with Him; into conformity to the image of His dear Son, and submission to His mind and will as revealed in the perplexing visitations and intricate windings of His mysterious providence.

"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." I do love spiritual arithmetic with JEHOVAH the Spirit as my Teacher. Look at this spiritual multiplication. In these words we have more than the desire of Peter—we have the covenant declaration of the Spirit in respect to all in grace-union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Have we grace? "He giveth more grace" (James iv. 6). Have we life? We shall have it more abundantly (John x. 10). Have we received of Christ's fulness? That received is the earnest and pledge of richer and more copious supplies (John i. 16). What a glorious, covenant-keeping God is ours! Does He indicate to me His will to multiply His mercies upon me? He will give me to know that I am a mere cipher before Him; but as He reveals Himself before me, blessed be His Name, I become something to Him and to His children with whom I am associated. Let Christ appear as the First, the Chief, the One Object of the heart's affections, and unsearchable riches are experimentally ours. As grace and peace are multiplied to us by the opening up of the treasures of the covenant by the Spirit, we bless, praise, eulogise, or speak well of the Name of our God for His regenerating mercy. It was our privilege this morning to dwell upon the eulogies poured upon JEHOVAH the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the blessings poured upon His own in covenant (Eph. i. 3, 4). We noticed also how Zecharias blessed and praised Him for His gracious visits and glorious redemption. Here we see the elect and scattered strangers one with Peter in ascribing all honour and blessing to Him for bringing them into possession of His grace and peace, and begetting them again to a lively and living hope. But while they were brought into possession of heavenly realities, and the assurance that they had an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled in heaven, they were left to wander in the wilderness for the proof of their grace and faith. Look at the sixth verse: *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice"*—that is, in the experimental possession of the inheritance, and the assurance of Divine keeping—"though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Temptations, not singly, but manifold. Is grace multiplied? Temptations will be also. Trials, tribulations, and troubles will abound. Well, say some, that is not very cheering. Look here!

"The tempest will blow, the billows shall swell,
Thy soul, full of woe, shall pass as through hell;
And all this to prove thee, to stain thy curs'd pride;
He loves thee for ever, but grace must be tried."

Ah, my dear friends, if you are determined to make your home down here, God's truth will not be cheering to you. If you desire to build your nest in any tree in this death-doomed forest, I have no cheering words for you. If you are wishing for sunshine all the way through the wilderness, miserable disappointment awaits you. But if God the Spirit leads you to

those blessed spots of resurrection power, and ascension glory to which I have lately directed your attention in the words of Christ to Mary, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John xx. 17); if you are brought into the blessed realisation of your citizenship in heaven, with your affections fixed there upon the person of a precious Christ, and your heart reposing in heavenly treasure where rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal, you will not find fault with me for the declaration of God's covenant truth to a covenant people, that your tribulations must be multiplied, and your temptations manifold. Through much tribulation the kingdom must be entered is a fact indelibly impressed on the spiritual experience of those saints whose histories are recorded in the blessed Word, and in these hearts of ours by the operation and grace of God the ever blessed Spirit. Mark well this precious statement, "*though now for a season, if need be.*" Trials will not last one moment longer than the time appointed by infinite Wisdom and purest Love; and there is a covenant "*need be*" for every one of them. The next part of the chapter describes the elect as obedient children, holy and redeemed, and at the 21st verse we have this precious declaration concerning them: "Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." Do I believe in God? It is by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb once slain, the Surety of the covenant, the Head and Representative of grace, that blessed and adorable One who holds Himself responsible to do everything for His failing and faltering people. Have I faith and hope? These rest not in the testimony of a preacher or in a sound creed, or in myself. They are in God as He is pleased to reveal Himself in His Word by His Spirit to my waiting and wanting heart. Oftentimes I wish—but I am conscious of the fleshly nature of the wish—I wish I had the power to impart to your hearts the same truth mine apprehends, that we may know that our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John i. 3). But I know I am utterly unable to impart spiritual truth to the heart of any. That is the work of the blessed Spirit, the Leader and Guide into all essential truth, the Remembrancer of Christ to the forgetful minds of tried and tempted disciples, who so often forget the lessons He has so graciously taught them. Where is your faith and hope? In your own possession? They will soon be lost to you if you boast of so great a privilege; but if you are brought to know and feel your utter helplessness, and to the place of spiritual submission to the sovereign will of God, with a sight of Christ as the Conservator of all spiritual blessings for you, to be supplied in the times of your necessity, you will thank God because He has been pleased to secure them for you.

where they can never be destroyed by all the combined attacks of sin and Satan. These attacks will take place and prove terrible realities to your souls. But all your wants are well provided for in Him. Look at that precious declaration in 1 Tim. i. 14: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." All the faith, and hope, and peace, and love I enjoy is in my great and glorious Head, and I tell you honestly and candidly, as one who believes he is taught of God, I do not ask to be put into possession of these things; but I do ask Him to keep my soul established in the truth that He holds me safe in His possession, and possesses every needful covenant blessing for me to be supplied in the time of favour, which is generally a time of God-wrought necessity. Peter tells the elect to whom He wrote that they are a purified people: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Are your souls purified? If so, how are they purified? Your answer at once will be, if you are spiritually one with Christ, "In obeying the truth through the Spirit." If you stopped short with "*obeying the truth*," and did not add, "*through the Spirit*," there would be a mutilation of God's precious truth. But with Peter you give the truth in its entirety, you acknowledge your obedience to the truth, while you confess that it is wholly through the Spirit. You obey the truth by the faith of Him who is the personification of truth. Without the faith of Christ there can be no belief in the Word of Christ. Without the faith of the great and glorious Head there can be no reliance in the truths of Divine revelation, no comfort from Divine communication; but if we are in possession of the faith of Christ (Gal. ii. 16), the faith of God's elect (Titus i. 1), the faith of the operation of God (Col. ii. 12), which sometimes questions its own reality, and ever ascribes all majesty, dominion, and power to its gracious Author and Finisher, our souls are purified from sin and guilt by Him. Here I would ask, To what extent? To which some of you may reply, "My corruptions and depravity abound, and day by day I am conscious of the filthiness of my wretched nature." Oh, my dear friends, your wretched nature will never be different. I am now speaking of God's work of grace carried on by Him in His new creation amidst all the depravity abounding in our wretched flesh. But here I would ask, "To what extent is this purification carried on?" Turn to 1 John iii. 3: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, *even as He is pure.*"

"A hope so much divine
May trials well endure,
For we, as sons in Christ, are made
As pure as He is pure."

My hope is Christ. "Christ in you the Hope of Glory" (Col. i. 27). As is our hope so is our purity. Yet this is not accom-

plished by submission to any outward acts, ablutions, or ceremonies; but simply "in obeying the truth through the Spirit," which is sure to beget unfeigned love to the brethren. Wherever a sinner is begotten again to the enjoyment of life, grace, godliness, and glory, and he beholds the marks and evidences of the same gracious work in others, love will respond to love, and the living child cannot help himself in the outpourings of his soul in prayer and supplication for the spiritual welfare, and eternal glorification of those who are partakers of the same grace, and heirs of the same inheritance. "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John v. 1). "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*" This precious declaration makes a marvellously clean sweep of that delusive error that God may begin His work of grace in a child, and leave it partly done. The seed of God is incorruptible, and fails not where it is graciously communicated. It is the Word of God—the eternal Word—the incarnate Word—the living Word. Christ!—the Life of God in His own elect. When our own God speaks of "*incorruptible seed,*" "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16). Brought into possession of this incorruptible seed, the seed-royal of heaven are taught to lay "*aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, and as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word,*" flowing from the breasts of Divine consolations, from a full-breasted God, "*that they may grow thereby.*" Having tasted that the Lord is gracious they cannot refuse to come to Him when He commands and draws them. We have noticed the characters of the persons who come, now let us notice,—

II.—The person spoken of: "Whom." This is none other than JEHOVAH-JESUS, the Saviour and Sustainer of His Church and people. He has the means in His own hand whereby His banished ones shall not be eternally expelled from Him. He commands them, they obey. Look at that blessed, precious, spiritual, new covenant command in Matt. xi. 28: "*Come unto Me,* all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ's commands are to certain characters. They are living souls, born again, living realities in JEHOVAH'S kingdom. They lack that brand of reprobation, "*unsociable,*" as seen in the marginal reading of Rom. i. 31. God's dear children are not unsociable before Him. He causes those who are begotten of Him to love their brethren and sisters in Him. Thus, if begotten of Him, I cannot but love those who possess the family likeness, and give evidence of their names being recorded in the Old Family Register. I cannot help myself in showing love and attachment to the friends of my loving Lord. I see the same spirit revealed throughout the whole Book of God. Often have I quoted those precious words of the Shunemite, "*I dwell among*

mine own people" (2 Kings iv. 13), and the words of the Spirit concerning the persecuted apostles, "*And being let go they went to their own company*" (Acts iv. 23). I love to be found among those whose chief aim is to exalt a precious Christ, and who put the crown of creation, providence and redemption upon His sacred head, and sing, "Crown Him Lord of all." In the midst of these an exalted Redeemer is ever found according to the prophecy of Jacob in Genesis, xlix. 10, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be;" and in keeping with His own precious promise to them, "For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20).

"*To whom coming.*" To a living, loving, and adorable person, not to a church, chapel, or meeting-house. These form not a clique collected round an eloquent Apollos, an accomplished Paul, or a zealous Peter. Their life consists not in adhering to a sound creed, or a correct formula of doctrine; but in communion with the Divine Three-in-One and with one another. They love to know their identity with Jesus and to enjoy the companionship of all those who are spiritually one with Him. Has His love found its way to our hearts? As assuredly as it has, we shall never rest satisfied until we are lost in the Source from whence it came—in Himself. Have we eternal life? We shall long to be with Him who is our life, and who declared for the comfort of His sorrowing disciples, "Because I live ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). O, what a glorious reason! It is not, "Because you believe, repent, or pray;" but, "Because I live."

"If my immortal Saviour lives,
Then my immortal life is sure;
His Word a firm foundation gives,
Built on this Rock, I rest secure."

"*To whom coming.*" To the great and glorious Head of grace, the elect, redeemed, and regenerate children of God continue to come. The secret of the text is this: not, they have come; but they come, and will continue to come to Him as led by the Spirit throughout the whole round of their spiritual history here below. It is as true of me to-night as it was twenty years ago. I come to Him with my sins, for none but He can purge them away. I come to Him with my sorrows, for none but He can comfort me. I come to Him with my weakness, for

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

I come to Him with my daily perplexities, and say,

"Jesus, my fainting spirit brings
Its wretchedness to Thee;
Thine eye alone can penetrate
The clouded mystery."

And it is my mercy to know that He is all-sufficient and ever

willing to save, strengthen, and succour me. He is the great and glorious JEHOVAH-JESUS, unto whom all power has been given in heaven and in earth, who holds in the hollow of His hand all the waves, billows, and waters through which I must pass to my rest above, who sways the sceptre of universal dominion, holding all creatures at His beck, and has the destinies of all at His behest. O, how condescending He is to draw to Himself, the immaculate, pure, and holy Jesus, poor vile worms of the earth, bringing them from the dunghill of corruption to inherit the throne of glory in oneness with Himself. Small indeed, ay, insignificant do we appear as we see ourselves in the light of Isaiah xl. 15, where the nations appear as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Not simply dust, but "*the small dust*," which to the human eye will not affect the balance in the slightest degree, no, not for a moment. If the nations are thus accounted by the great and glorious JEHOVAH what must individuals be? Think of a mite, and the slow progress it would make in traversing the space between the tip of my finger and the crown of my head. I will say nothing of time, for it would take an age to accomplish it. Think of this and then try to grasp the infinity of JEHOVAH who inhabits eternity and fills immensity. The thought is too vast for finite minds to comprehend, yet He is pleased to make known to us the riches of His grace in bringing poor vile sinners by the constraining power of His love to hold communion with Himself, JEHOVAH, Three-in-One, and One-in-Three. In the enjoyment of this grace we can sing with a will,—

"Just as I am—Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down—
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come."

"*To whom coming.*" To a real, living, and loving person, who lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven for me. He endured the hell that I deserved. He passed through the gloom of eternal condemnation which must have been my lot in hell's dark regions but for His condescending love to me. Now He ever lives in heaven's glory to intercede for me, and with the provisions of covenant love to supply all my wants and scatter all my cares. He purges away all my transgressions and clothes me in His pure white righteousness, bringing me into the presence of His Father a perfectly accepted one, and blessing me with the earnest of my inheritance in JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is my Saviour from every sin; my Deliverer from every trouble: my Solace in every sorrow; my Supply in every necessity; my Stay in every temptation; and will be my Glory throughout a long eternity.

III.—The progress: "*coming.*" Look well at that precious word, "*coming.*" A right apprehension of its meaning as set

forth by the Spirit, takes away all fleshly conceit from the spiritually-minded child of God. I know there is a divinely-wrought necessity for my spirit to be found coming to Him this night, for the supply of those necessities created in me by the Holy Ghost. I am dependent upon Him for every gracious word I utter—for every spiritual thought that lodges in my mind—for every heavenly aspiration—and, for every yearning desire for His companionship. It is His own gracious and covenant command that when weary, worn, and heavily laden with sin and sorrow, I should come to Him, and when I hear His animating voice, I must come—I do come. In these things my soul knows full well the meaning of dear John Newton's words,—

“Thy promise is my only plea :
 With this I venture nigh ;
 Thou callest burden'd souls to Thee.
 And such, O Lord, am I.
 “Bow'd down beneath a load of sin ;
 By Satan sorely press'd ;
 By wars without and fears within,
 I come to Thee for rest.”

O, how blessed it is to feel and know this daily coming by the *faith* of His own giving. “For he that cometh to God must believe that He is” (Heb. xi. 6). Coming and believing are associated in John vi. 35, and can only be wrought and maintained by the power of God the Father. See John vi. 44—45 : “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him ; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, *cometh unto me.*” It is a precious privilege to find ourselves *coming* with the *hope* of His own inspiring. This “hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us” (Rom. v. 5). In the chariot of His Word, filled with promises great and precious, we are drawn to Him by the cords of love, for pardon, peace, provision, purity, and perfection, and in Him alone we find them.

“*Coming.*” There is one thing I would ask you in connection with this soul-inspiring revelation of our Master's mind and will concerning us. What is there to hinder you coming to His table ? Is unworthiness a stumbling-block in your way ? Surely not. Of the full, free fountain of atoning blood we can truly say,—

“This Fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear ;
 The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here ;
 Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare ;
 You can't come too filthy : come just as you are.”

I once heard a minister say something which expressed less than he meant. It was this : “*The unworthiness of a sinner is the feeling sense of his unworthiness.*” I knew the dear man's meaning,

and felt that all my worthiness is in Christ, not in me, my feelings, or my frames. It is no mock humility to feel myself unworthy to mix with the children of my Lord the King, and to know what that means,—

“ I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all.”

My dear friends and brethren in Him, can you refuse to come to the table as spread by Him for the hungry, the poor, the needy, and the distressed? Here I would ask in all solemnity, Why stumble at the lesser when you are taken up with the greater? Why should the mind be perplexed in reference to eating a morsel of bread and drinking a drop of wine when you can rejoice in receiving the wine of the covenant, and in feasting upon His body once broken for you? Long as we live in these frail tabernacles of clay we shall be more or less sensible of our utter unworthiness, while the truth will be continued in our daily experience, “*To whom coming.*” And when our coming in faith, and hope, and prayer down here has ceased, then before His throne up yonder our glorified spirits will enjoy an unceasing coming to Him with revenues of praise and adoration to His great and glorious Name for ever and ever for grace so glorious and mercy so magnanimous and divine.

With these may He grant us His blessing. Amen.

H Y M N.

JUST as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, healing of the mind;
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am (Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down),
Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

OVER YONDER.

O! to be over yonder !
 In that land of wonder,
 Where the angel voices mingle, and the angel harpers ring ;
 To be free from care and sorrow,
 And the anxious dread to-morrow,
 To rest in light and sunshine, in the presence of the King.

O! to be over yonder !
 My yearning heart grows fonder
 Of looking to the skies, to see the day-star bring
 Some tidings of the waking,
 The cloudless, pure day breaking,
 My heart is yearning, yearning, for the presence of the King.

O! to be over yonder !
 Alas ! I sigh and ponder,
 Why clings my poor weak heart to any earthly thing ?
 Each tie of earth must sever,
 And pass away for ever ;
 But there's no more separation in the presence of the King.

O! to be over yonder !
 The longing groweth stronger
 When I see the wild doves cleave the air on rapid wing ;
 I long for their fleet pinions,
 To reach my Lord's dominions,
 And rest my weary soul in the presence of the King.

O! to be over yonder !
 In that land of wonder,
 Where life, and light, and sunshine, beam fair on everything ;
 Where the day-beam is unshaded,
 And pure as He who made it,
 The land of cloudless sunshine, where Jesus is the King.

O! when shall I be dwelling
 Where the angel voices swelling
 In triumphant Hallelujahs make the vaulted heavens ring ;
 Where the pearly gates are gleaming,
 And the morning star is beaming,
 O! when shall I be yonder, in the presence of the King ?

O! when shall I be yonder ?
 The longing groweth stronger,
 To join in all the praises the redeemed ones do sing ;
 Within those heavenly places,
 Where the angels veil their faces
 In awe and adoration, in the presence of the King.

O! that I were o'er yonder !
 All lonely here I wander,
 Yearning for the welcome summons, longing for the bird's fleet wing :
 The midnight may be dreary,
 And the heart be worn and weary,
 But there's no more sorrow yonder, in the presence of the King.

Ireland.

F. C. ARMSTRONG.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

"BORN OF WATER."

A Sermon

PREACHED IN WOODBRIDGE CHAPEL, CLERKENWELL, ON TUESDAY
EVENING, AUGUST 11TH, 1874, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—John iii. 5.

A WONDERFUL picture we have here set before us: a picture drawn by the unerring pen of inspiration, and given to us through the instrumentality of the Evangelist John: a picture which would form a wonderful study, ay, too wonderful for the artist, because in it we behold wonderful and marvellous condescension on the part of two different and distinct persons. On the one hand, we have the marvellous condescension of the Son of God in meeting the wants, ignorance and prejudices of the great and learned Master in Israel; on the other, we see the wonderful condescension of the Ruler of the Jews in seeking an interview, and entering into conversation with Him who was despised and rejected of men, hated by the rulers, persecuted by the priests, and hunted to death by the whole. In this blessed portion of God's most Holy Word we find much that is instructing, creature-humbling and God-exalting. The Holy Ghost, I believe, generally teaches the minds of God's children by placing striking contrasts before them. Notice the contrast between the two narratives recorded in the third and fourth chapters of this Gospel. In the third we see our Lord Jesus Christ causing one to come unto Him, to sit at His feet, listen to His words, and learn the lessons of His grace, who, according to the world's estimate, was all that could be desired. He possessed all that religion and the letter of Divine revelation could do for him. And what was he? "A man of the Pharisees," and so far as his religious connections and works were concerned hateful in the estimation and eye of God. We come to the fourth chapter,

where we see the marvellous grace and condescension of the Man of sorrows, the great and glorious Prophet of the Lord, the Revealer of His Father's will, "He must needs go through Samaria." Why is He under this necessity? Why must He journey in weariness and in loneliness, and seek for rest and refreshment by the well? Simply because a straying daughter of Jacob, ay, and blessed be God, a real, spiritual daughter of Abraham, and that by covenant ties, must come to that very well. You see the same absolute sovereignty displayed in the movements of Jesus when He must bring salvation to, and abide in, the house of Zacchæus. It is said (Luke xix. 4), "And he (Zacchæus) ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass *that*." Our translators have added the word "*way*;" but He was to pass *that* tree, *that* very spot, to bring salvation to the home and heart of Zacchæus. So He must come to *that* very well, there to meet the poor harlot of Samaria, allure her to Himself, win her affections, fill her heart with His love, and enlighten her dark understanding with Himself the True Light. In Nicodemus we have a moral and religious man, a *pious* professor. In Samaria's daughter we behold a wretched harlot, an abandoned outcast. In him we reach the top of the scale of morality and religion: in her we descend to the depths of immorality and depravity. Notice the marvellous contrast between the dying thief and the devout centurion (Luke xxiii.; Acts x.). In one case not a good work appears: he is destitute of every moral movement, his thoughts are enmity against the Christ of God who hangs by his side, his words are revilings and blasphemies against that loving One who at that very moment was waiting for the set time of favour to look life, love, light and liberty into his sin-stricken soul, embrace him in His loving and compassionate arms, and with him wing His flight to His glory-home above. In the other case we have the devout Cornelius: he feared God, gave much alms to the people, prayed to God always, and whose prayers ascended for a memorial before God; yet it was necessary that Peter should preach unto him words whereby he might be saved. Saved? Yes! The one must be saved from his religion, and the other from his irreligion. So it is now; religious or irreligious, pious or profane, moral or immoral, a child of God without His regenerating grace can never enter into the experimental and intelligent possession of the kingdom of God.

But there is a peculiar feature in our Lord's ministry as recorded by John which I would have you notice. Now to whom did He preach? Not to pews full of hearers. No, nor with the intention of keeping crowds hanging on His lips. Let me ask you, what is the worth of a chapel filled up to the ceiling if the life of God is wanting in the preacher and people? Yet it is pleasant to see multitudes brought under the sound of

God's glorious Gospel which is His power unto salvation to every one that believeth. But this Gospel reveals a precious Christ, seeking, finding and teaching His isolated and hidden ones. In the first chapter He sees Nathaniel under the fig tree, and afterward informs him of His knowledge of him:—"Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nathaniel is amazed, and cries:—"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." He felt assured that Jesus knew all about him: his secret sighs, his heart's desires, his hidden longings; and that such an One must be truly God.

In the second chapter He appears in public and graces the marriage at Cana with His presence, providing the guests with cheering and exhilarating wine. True sociability characterised our gracious Master here, so different to the sanctimonious whims and prejudices of many in these days who, with canting whine and nasal twang, can talk more of their "tender conscience" than they can of the Spirit and example of our blessed Lord. How it sickens one to hear oily and smooth-tongued creatures saying, "O, I cannot hear the Gospel there because of the presence of So and so." Let such consider that the house and table of Simon the Pharisee was a suitable place for Jesus to bless the sorrowing heart of a woman that was a sinner. Towards the close of this second chapter the scene changes, and gentle Jesus is seen lashing the backs of pretentious hypocrites with a whip of small cords.

In this third chapter He receives and teaches the isolated Ruler of the Jews the glorious truths of His everlasting Gospel.

In the fourth chapter we see Him conversing with the lonely woman.

In the fifth chapter He enters the house of mercy, Bethesda, where a great multitude of impotent folk lay; but His business was with one individual. "When He saw him"—not the multitude—"He said to him"—not to the multitude—"Wilt thou be made whole?" This is discriminating mercy, and distinguishing grace!

Look at the sixth chapter. What a picture we have here! Thousands follow our most glorious Christ; but, not even for the miracles they saw. No, the loaves and the fishes allured them. He begins to sound in their ears the glorious truths of the Gospel. He declares the inability of all to come to Him, and the necessity for Divine and sovereign power to bring His own given ones to Him. Where are the crowds? Sifting-time had arrived:—"For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him." And He said:—"Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." You see the word "time" is supplied, and really ought

not to be there. It was from *that* statement of Divine sovereignty and human inability that these self-seekers walked no more with Him. Hypocrites will not have anything to do with God's Christ; yet, He will seek out and gather to Himself His "one of a city, and two of a family." Yes, one by one they shall be gathered and brought to Zion, and He will still meet with His twos and threes as they are gathered by the power of the Holy Ghost in His Name to delight in His truth, and to rejoice in the sweet enjoyment of His love.

Let us now look at this portion which I did not intend to preach from, but the hymn which you sang just now settled the matter for me.

"There was a man of the Pharisees." Who were the Pharisees? During our Lord's sojourn upon earth there were two great divisions or sects among the Jews: the Pharisees and Sadducees. If you wish me to describe them for you, I will try to do so. The Pharisees are represented by the Papists, Ritualists, ceremonialists and showy professors of our day. When you meet with one of these, it matters not whether he be archbishop, bishop, priest, parson, or dissenting pastor, or deacon, in such you see a Pharisee. Who were the Sadducees? You may see them in the rationalists of the present day, those who deify reason and adore man's puny intellect. There are many such in lawn sleeves and surplices, for whom JEHOVAH has an awful reckoning in store.

"*Pharisees!*" You will find them faithfully described in Luke xvi., xvii., and xviii. "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided Him. And He said unto them, ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (xvi. 14, 15). Again, "And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation (or, "*with outward show,*" margin). Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (xii. 20, 21). This plainly shows that all Pharisees are interested with the outside, and care not for the inward movements and operations of God the Holy Ghost. They look to ceremonial effect and ignore Divine power: they boast in sacramental efficacy and deny the necessity for spiritual regeneration and gracious illumination. But, blessed be God, His kingdom, which is not outward, but inward, not carnal, but spiritual, comes not by the will of man, be he pope, prelate, priest, parson or presumer, but by the mysterious power and sovereign will of God the Holy Ghost. O what awful and horrid delusion it is to imagine that divine life is communicated by the sprinkling of a few drops of water, and the very water fouled by the so-called priest's fingers; for it is an undisputed fact that the human finger fouls, mars

and soils everything it touches. Ah, no, my friends, the best of all teachers declares that the heavenly wind, the Holy Spirit, "bloweth where *He* listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," and is set up within the elect of God when Christ the King in Zion is formed in the heart, the Hope of glory.

In chap. xviii. we have a graphic description of these wretched Pharisees. See! "And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray." *Two men.* Not a particle of difference between them naturally, but grace made a difference; "the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank Thee that I am not"—Not what? I am not a sinner! That is the plain meaning of his words. Job says, "I am vile." Isaiah says, "I am undone," "I am a man of unclean lips." Peter says, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." Paul says, "I am the chief of sinners." Throughout the whole Word of God the confession of living souls to God is, "I am." Yes! "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" but the Pharisee makes a difference of his own, and in the cold, formal language of concentrated selfishness says, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men." He knows nothing of the spirituality of JEHOVAH'S law. He draws an invidious comparison between himself and the poor Publican, standing afar off:—"or even as this Publican." I can tell you, there was a depth of contempt lurking beneath that word "*this*," "*this Publican*." This wretched Pharisee appears contemptible in the very contempt He displays toward others. Do you never come across any of this selfsatisfied fraternity? Listen to some of their blatant bleatings:—"I am not as other men! I read my Bible. I am very exact in my attendance upon the means of grace. I support *my* place of worship to the utmost of *my* ability. *My* voice is often heard in the Sunday-school and prayer meeting. I have the well-being of society and the good of souls so much at heart." Why, my friends, the great Searcher of hearts sees all the while that all such are detestable and filthy hypocrites, while the poor broken-hearted Publican who can only sigh out, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is truly precious in His eyes and to His heart. I might produce other passages that describe this odious lot, but I forbear. Notice! Nicodemus is born, and his Pharisaic parents, looking on with fond delight, say:—"He is of the true stock of Israel, with not one drop of the corrupt blood of the Gentiles running in his veins. We will give him a name corresponding with his nature—Nicodemus." What does that mean? "*Innocent blood!*" O how differently does David express himself:—"Behold, I was

shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Look at children! you behold temper, passion and sin as they hang upon their mothers' breasts. Look in the cradle! sin is there. How do you know? Suffering bears witness to the terrible truth, and death gives lamentable evidence of the presence of its parent, SIN. Children are carefully and tenderly trained; but do they always act in placid obedience and sweet compliance with their parent's will? Do they? You and I know full well they do not. And yet there are those so foolish and ignorant, so deeply steeped in error, as to imagine that children, when born into the world, are so innocent and pure that their minds are like a sheet of white writing paper that will take any impression, either good or evil; according to the will of the parent or teacher. O, Satan! what a liar and deceiver thou art!

Nicodemus was born a Pharisee, educated a Pharisee, and came to Jesus a Pharisee. Is not this a picture? A full-blown Pharisee coming to Jesus! Humbly seeking instruction at the footstool of sovereign mercy! Mark! He came by night. Why by night? Look at John xii. 42, 43: "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Nicodemus was timid. Does Jesus rebuke his timidity? No, He received him with that grace which He alone can shew. See! It does not matter whether a man be a pietest or a profligate; whether he be high in the scale of social advancement, or deep in the depths of vice and depravity; whether he be possessed with seven sweet angels of religious perfection, or with seven devils of enmity against God; if electing mercy, redeeming love, discriminating grace, and distinguishing favour bring such to the feet of a precious Christ, His arms and His heart are ever open to receive them. Nicodemus comes, and, with the bland courtesy peculiar to his sect, introduces himself thus: "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." That would sound very nice, and was very true, but the Lord required not a Pharisee to tell Him who or what He was; for He ever loves to notice the confession of sin, ignorance, and error from the broken hearts and faltering lips of those whom grace has distinguished as His own. Look at chap. i. 17: "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Sometimes Jesus reveals His truth in which grace appears not, but justice, and sinners are offended. Sometimes He manifests His grace, but always with truth, and sinners are sweetly drawn to Him. He meets the Pharisee with truth, and the truth confounds him; He meets the poor harlot of Samaria with grace, and she finds in Him her Saviour and her God. To her He said, "If thou knewest *the gift of God.*" He said to him,

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." I remember once meeting a full-blown professor who said to me: "Where did you get your religion from?" "Why, my dear fellow," said I, "where did yours come from?" "From my heart!" he replied. "Then it is a very dirty religion. It is a fact, I assure you; for our Lord says, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man.' The heart whose thoughts are always and only evil, and which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, is a pretty spot for you to get your religion from." The man was astounded. He inquired, "Well, where should it come from?" "From up yonder; and it comes right down to the hearts of God's elect, as stated by James: 'Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'" Now, if you look at John iii. 3, you will see, "Except a man be born *from above*." See! He who is the Life of His elect people and the beginning of the creation of God—He who is the perfection of grace, glory, and life to His people—He is up there before the throne of God for them, and His glorious resurrection life brought to my poor heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost; Christ, formed in my heart the Hope of glory, is the new birth, and anything short of that is but religious sham and delusion.

"*Born of water.*" Now, mark! It is not except a man be baptised with or in water—a fearful delusion propagated by Papists, Puseyites, and Mormons—no, but, "Except a man be born again *from above*, he cannot see"—that is, he cannot understand, comprehend, or discern, the privileges, immunities, mysteries, or nature of JEHOVAH'S kingdom. Before this declaration Nicodemus stood confounded. He asks, "How can a man be born when he is old?" This ruler of the Jews, this master in Israel, though well acquainted with the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, which set forth the new birth in a variety of figures, is painfully ignorant of the spirit thereof. Now we come to the words of our text: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

What is this water? Listen, pay attention, and may the Lord enable you to take this portion and its preciousness home with you, and bless you in the enjoyment of the same. We will commence with Moses. See!—

Deut. xxxii. 2:—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." What is rain? Is it not water? Don't you like the dropping of that water? "My doctrine," which makes known JEHOVAH'S greatness, sovereignty goodness, grace and care. Ah, such is the doctrine

of every God-sent minister, it drops in sweet refreshing showers upon the weary pilgrims of Zion as they pass through this barren land, and wait upon their God for the communications of His grace. Look again (Psa. cxix. 9):—"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." You see that the cleansing element is the Word, or the spiritual water whereby a young man's way is cleansed.

Turn to Isa. lv. 10:—"As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." Here you see that rain comes down with its present blessing, the snow too descends, but it may lie upon the ground for a few minutes, or for hours, days, weeks or months, before the melting season arrives. Is it not so with you and me oftentimes in spiritual matters? We sit under the sound of God's glorious Gospel, and every one around are blest, while we remain cold and listless. But, by the grace and indwelling of the blessed Remembrancer, words that may have dropped in our ears long years ago, now warm our cold hearts with refreshing power. This is God's snow, God's water, God's Word.

In many other portions of Old Testament Scripture, we find the life and power of this water set forth; but, we will now notice the testimony of the Holy Ghost in John's Gospel. Look at the fourth chapter, where our blessed Lord opens up the mysteries of grace to the poor Samaritan woman. He says to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Again. "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." The woman thought, like thousands since her day, the Lord meant natural water, but let me have the spiritual, and rationalists, ceremonialists, and sacramentalists are welcome to all the rest.

Come with me to the thirteenth chapter. We see our Lord Jesus Christ washing His disciples' feet? He comes to Peter, "and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean

every whit; and ye are are clean but not all." Yet they were all washed with the water in the basin, but Judas remained unclean. After this Judas went out, and to the eleven, whom He had spiritually washed and cleansed, Jesus said, "Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John xv. 3). Mark! clean! washed! How? "Through the Word." Look again at John xvii. 17. Here we see Jesus rendering an account of His work to the Father, and pleading for His whole Church "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." Separate them from all unhallowed and worldly influences and associations, by the power and operation of Thine own Word of truth. Now look at that glorious chapter in which the figure of man and wife describes the union existing between Christ and His Church (Eph. v. 25—27):—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Did you notice that statement? "*the washing of water by the Word.*" From these statements we gather that JEHOVAH'S power in the regeneration and cleansing of His people is—"THE WORD."

We will now look at a few portions where the Word is mentioned in connection with the Spirit's work of regeneration.

"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth" (James i. 18).

"This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me" (Psa. cxix. 50).

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter i. 23).

Now I fully believe that under the figure of water our blessed Lord presented before the mind of Nicodemus His own glorious power which alone is effectual in the regeneration of elect and redeemed sinners. Mark! "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). Look at that precious hymn of Hart's, which I scribbled on a fly-leaf of my Bible:—

" Say, Christian, would'st thou thrive
In knowledge of thy Lord,
Against no Scripture ever strive,
But tremble at His Word ?

" If ought there dark appear,
Bewail thy want of sight,
No imperfection can be there,
For all God's words are right.

" The Scriptures and the Lord
Bear one tremendous name :

The written and th' Incarnate WORD
In all things are the same."

Here we have the written Word, which is JEHOVAH'S revelation of the living WORD, even of our most glorious Christ, who is the beginning and consummation, the Fountain and Head of the new creation, and also the Life of every member of His elect, blood-bought and regenerate family, first revealed in the sovereign act of regeneration, manifested in the various stages of Divine experience, and communicated in a way and manner wholly unknown to the formal professor and worldling.

O what a blessed privilege it is to know that the Word of Life, God's spiritual water, is His power "unto salvation to every one that believeth; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Now, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). See also Eph. i. 13: "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." I do wish you to notice one more portion (1 Peter i. 22): "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Mark! No regeneration, no new birth, no life, no cleansing, no purification without the Word, no obedience without the Spirit. Ah, blessed be God! Joseph Irons once sang so sweetly and truly:—

"We have listened to the preacher,
Truth by him has now been shown,
But we want a greater Teacher,
From the everlasting throne:
Application
Is the work of God alone."

You see here we have spiritual water, the Word, and the glorious Person who applies it, the Spirit. As water applied to this body, or to my clothes, has a cleansing and purifying effect, so the water of life, the water of salvation, the waters of everlasting life and love, from under the throne of God and the Lamb, as they come down by the power of the Holy Ghost, and are applied by Him to the soul of a ransomed and favoured sinner, impart life, purge the soul from all sin, scatter errors, chase away doubts and fears, and separate from carnal pleasures and worldly associations. The life-giving Word is seen in the waters of Ezekiel's prophecy which caused everything to live whithersoever they came (Ezekiel xlvii. 9). And if the water, or the Word of Life, has come, by the power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to our heart, we must realise and know that we are the children of God, born of water, born of the Word, born of the Spirit; ay, "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13).

Listen! Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the

Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). "Where the word of a king is there is power." This is King Jesus! This is the Word! this is the water! this is His power! This is Himself! O it is blessed to know that He has made the preaching of the Word His own grand ordinance whereby He is brought to the hearts of His people, and they are brought into communion with Himself, and into conformity with His image. Blessings upon His glorious Name, He will accomplish every good thing in us designed in His counsels of old. What are impossibilities to us He graciously performs. See Jer. ii. 22: "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the LORD God." Again, Job ix. 30, 31 (a peculiarly precious chapter to me, in which Job declares all means in human hands to be utterly vain in accomplishing spiritual changes or producing gracious effects): "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." But in Ezekiel xvi., He is gloriously described in His love and pity finding His child in its pollution, depravity, and corruption. Listen! "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest Mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil." In all this we see the glory and the power of JEHOVAH'S Gospel, in which He brings salvation, and comes riding triumphantly to the redeemed sinner's soul. What is God's Word? It is God's expression of Himself as a God of everlasting love in the person of Jesus, and this brought home to my heart, by the power of God's eternal Spirit, gives me to know that I am "born again," "born from above," "born of water and of the Spirit," that Christ is formed in me the Hope of glory, and that I live in blessed and experimental oneness in Him.

"Except a man be born of the Word and Spirit of God, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Mark! First righteousness, then peace and joy. It is an everlasting kingdom that can never be destroyed. It cometh not by observation or outward show; but is spiritual, inward, and invisible, understood and comprehended by all those who have learned of the Father, by the grace of His Spirit, and have found in the person of a precious Christ, their King and All-in-all. In these hearts He sets up His throne, rules by love, and lives in their affections. They now enter by faith, fear and feeling into the spiritual possession of the kingdom of God, and rejoice as subjects thereof, and in the experimental participation of its eternal realities, precious privileges, and

blessed immunities. Do notice those solemn words—"cannot enter into!" Have we entered into the kingdom of God with any degree of experimental intelligence, with the knowledge of God's own giving, with that spiritual discernment of which the world is ignorant? "There is a path that no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen." The hypocrite, with his keen discernment, cannot see, know, or enter into the mysterious beauties of this path, a path in which the living elect distinctly trace the suffering footsteps of the Son of God. Yes, here are seen, known, and felt the blessings of a covenant salvation, our justification from all things by the imputation of Christ's glorious and perfect righteousness, our freedom from all sin in the person of the God-Man, our complete clearance from all Satan's accusations, law charges, the world's rebukes, and man's reproaches. O glorious position! Loved by the great eternal Three-in-One, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies: ay, and graciously lifted up to the third heaven of Gospel privilege to enjoy the smile and bask in the sunshine of never-dying favour.

Wondrous mercy! Enjoyed in measure, comprehended a little, entered into with a feeling and adoring heart by all those who are born of water, spiritual water, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, the WORD OF GOD, and the blessed Spirit. Yes, the blessed Spirit who quickens into spiritual and eternal life every elect son and daughter of the living God, to enjoy the kingdom, in grace here, and in glory hereafter. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv. 50). "Flesh and blood cannot reveal the things of the kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 17). "Flesh and blood cannot be conferred with, and the child of God abide in His peace" (Gal. i. 16). Blessed is the people that know and enter spiritually and intelligently into the kingdom, whom Jesus takes in hand, sanctifies and cleanses with the washing of water by the Word, and gives them to know that they stand before the face of the Father without spot, or wrinkle, blot or blemish.

O how precious it is to know that my God looks upon me in the Son of His love, and sees me His own child, washed from all sin in the blood of atonement, justified and accepted in the righteousness of God, and sitting at the feet of my precious Jesus in my right mind. Glorious prospect! Looking for the day when "an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and His sweet words of welcome shall ravish our adoring hearts:—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

And now may JEHOVAH, Father, Word and Spirit, bless us and keep us, make His face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us; lift up His countenance upon us, and give us peace both now and evermore. Amen and Amen.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“MY DOVE.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,
NOVEMBER 21ST, 1875, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“O My dove, thou art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”—Song of Solomon. ii. 14.

THROUGHOUT the whole of this blessed book of Solomon's Song we are met with fine figurative language describing and setting forth the love and affection which exists between Christ and His Church, between the heavenly Bridegroom and His spiritual bride, between the great and glorious Head of grace and His members-elect in eternal oneness with Himself, who are brought by the power of the Holy Ghost to the knowledge and enjoyment of their high calling in Him. As we look through the various chapters and verses we are lost sometimes in the glowing language of the Bridegroom and bride in their expressions of mutual love and affection. Here and there it is so intensified as to cause the soul that knows nothing of oneness with Him to be suspicious of exaggeration. But God knows nothing of exaggeration or superfluity in His most Holy Word. Sincerity pervades every portion. Purity prevails in every part. This we see in Solomon's declaration, “Every word of God is pure” (Prov. xxx. 5). This must be so as coming from the Fountain of infinite purity. Pure as inspired by the Spirit of holiness, and written by holy men of old. Every word communicated by the Holy Ghost to the heart of an elect vessel of mercy is pure. This is in accordance with the statement of the Psalmist : “The words of the LORD are pure words ; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psalm xii. 6). This seven times denotes the perfection of purity, God's work of purification is perfect. He knows of nothing short of it. “A furnace of earth.” What is that ? Is it not this poor weak

body of mine? This earthen vessel containing heavenly treasure? Yes, in these earthen vessels God's pure words shall be separated from all the carnal notions and vain delusions which lurk in our minds, and which we would ever mix up with His free and sovereign grace and truth. As we are brought to enjoy the fulness and freeness of Divine love, Old Carnality would drag us down to the cold and barren regions of legality, were it not for JEHOVAH'S magnanimous and magnified mercy, that mercy which drew Lot from the sinful shades of Sodom to little Zoar. The Father in His electing love, the Son in His redeeming grace, and the Holy Ghost in His constraining power, are blessedly One in separating and purifying us from those errors and evils which otherwise would maintain their ascendancy over us. Blessed with the love of the eternal Three-in-One we are safe, whatever may be the influences surrounding us. We see this in the case of Moses when JEHOVAH placed Him upon a rock, lest the glory of the LORD should overwhelm him; he was taken from his place of privilege *upon* the Rock, and fixed in his place of protection *in* the Rock. God said to him, "And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the Rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by." Yes, the language of Canaan is highly figurative, and contains expressions which the world considers exaggerated and fulsome. It is a high and exalted privilege for us to be blessed with spiritual discernment and in an enlightened understanding to know something of Christ's amazing, wondrous love, unknown to all the world beside. As this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, and we begin to express its glowing movements and exhilarating effects, the world, with all those out of the secret, looks on and wonders are we drunk (Acts ii. 13), or are we mad? (Isa. lix. 15, margin). The children of the bond-woman stand in astonishment, and are surprised to think how the children of the free can speak in such exalted strains, express themselves in the superlative, and claim a precious Christ as their All-in-all. Well, let the bondslaves growl, and self-sufficient pietists sneer, the true-born child of God, as he is moved with spiritual honesty before his God can say,—

"If ask'd what of Jesus I think?
 Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
 I say, He's my Meat and my Drink,
 My Life, and my Strength, and my Store;
 My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
 My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
 My Hope from beginning to end,
 My portion, my Lord, and my All."

When my heart burns with love to Him it must tell out its love for Him, knowing that He has done so much for it. Notice the strong, ardent language of the bride in chap. viii. 6, 7: "Set

me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm, for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave." What a marvellous description of divinely communicated love. This is the love JEHOVAH-JESUS has for His bride, and that which He begets in the bride to Himself. "*Love strong as death.*" Death grasps tenaciously its prey, and holds it with a firm grip, irrespective of the grief of those who are bereaved. Let life depart from the body, not all the resources of philosophy or physiology brought to bear upon it, can restore it to its former animation. Death still retains its hold, and man, with all his vaunted wisdom and power, is proved foolish and powerless. "*Jealousy cruel as the grave.*" Down to the cold and silent grave we have often committed all that was mortal of some near and dear to us, while the widow's wail and the orphan's sobs have proved repeatedly that the grave is jealous over its prey and will not yield up its dead. As the most earnest desires, ardent longings, and fond hopes are fruitless in delivering objects of affection from the hand of the grave, so when all our good intentions, *pious* endeavours, creature righteousness, and human ability are buried by the strong hand of JEHOVAH in the grave of His own preparing, He will see to it that they win not our affections from Him. As assuredly as thy Jesus has taken thee to His loved embrace, and holds thy heart captivated with His loving affection, thy flesh, thy relatives, thy former friends will do their utmost to drag thee thence. Thy flesh will resist the restraint of all conquering grace. Thy relatives will think the love that has severed thee in spirit from them to be hatred indeed. Thy former friends will think thee cruel, harsh, unkind. Whenever Divine love makes its way to the heart of a redeemed sinner, and separates him from the service of Satan, sin, and self, the world will be sure to insinuate that he is a man of eccentric views and strong feelings. Did you ever know a sinner saved by sovereign grace who was not moved with strong feelings when the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him, giving a sense of pardoned sin and freedom from all condemnation and care? I never did. Yet it is a blessed privilege to know that whatever our feelings may be our interest in His love can never be affected by them. In our frames and feelings we are ever changing. Now hot, then cold. Now sweet, then sour. Now light, then dark. But of that great and glorious One who is the object of our faith, hope, and love, we may well sing,—

"Zion's Friend in nothing alters,
Though all others may and do;
His is love that never falters,
Always to its object true:
Happy Zion,
Crowned with mercies ever new."

Yes, that is a precious and glorious fact. We are in a measure

the creatures of circumstances, and are feelingly affected by them, but we know that circumstances are according to His all-wise arrangement, and can only result in His unsullied glory. We are the subjects of innumerable changes. We change with every fleeting circumstance, and when the cold winds of adversity blow in fitful gusts around us we find ourselves enshrouded in the mantle of accursed ingratitude. But how blessed it is to be led from changing scenes to Him—the unchanging and unchangeable.

“O My dove.” This is the language of endearing affection, of fond and fervent love. It is not the language of the bride to the Bridegroom, but of the Bridegroom to His bride, and that in a season of despondency. Her language to Him is according to her everchanging feelings. His loving expressions to her are according to His own unbending purposes. At one time she mourns her blackness and defilement, while at other times she rejoices because of the perfect beauty and comeliness put upon her by the Lord her God (Ezek. xvi. 14). I do love to dwell upon the immutability of my gracious Lord. This is the characteristic truth of the epistle to the Hebrews. In every chapter we see something changing in contrast with the Unchangeable. In the first chapter the heavens and the earth are represented as perishing and passing away, while Christ is set forth, as also in the last chapter, as *“THE SAME.”* At both ends of this matchless epistle the immutability of our Lord appears. In each chapter, whatever is revealed other than Christ Himself, want and weakness are manifest. Angels cannot redeem, Moses cannot save. Aaron cannot atone. Joshua cannot give rest. Melchisedec cannot bless. Sacrifices cannot satisfy. Saints cannot solace. Failure and mutability is seen in everything, and according to the eleventh chapter they are seen in all the saints. At the commencement of the twelfth chapter we read, *“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”* The sin which doth so easily beset us is that of accursed unbelief, which is the parent of every other sin. *“Looking unto Jesus,”* or, as we may legitimately read it, *“Looking off unto Jesus.”* Looking off from earthly things, angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Melchisedec, types, shadows, rites and ceremonies, from the whole host of those who have gone to glory before us to Jesus. We shall see nothing but sin, failure, want and sorrow, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, ay, one hair's breadth apart from Him. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is *“THE SAME”* yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Creation changes, but the Creator changes not. Religious worship, however Scriptural it may be, is ever changing; but the object of our worship is ever the same. Our love to Him is a hobbling affair, but—

"His love no variation knows."

The design of the Holy Ghost in the epistle to the Hebrews is to give the worshipping child of God a clear lift out of, and above, everything earthly and changing into the enjoyment of His spiritual and eternal portion in the great and glorious Three-in-One JEHOVAH.

"*My dove.*" In the words of the text the loving Bridegroom speaks to one who knows something of winter, weariness and woe. All such He brings under the apple tree where He indulges them with sweet rest and refreshment. He brings His loved one into His house of wine, and reveals to her His everlasting and unfailing love. Is she sick of love? His left hand supports while His right hand embraces her. To His waiting and weary Church He comes leaping upon the mountains of her guilt and condemnation, those obstacles reared by Satan to keep her at a felt distance from God. Over the hills of our doubts and fears, accursed unbelief and wretched indifference, He comes skipping to take full possession of our hearts. Nothing can impede or resist the onward course of His affection. During His absence our spirits droop and we anxiously wait for His approach. Listen to His gracious covenant commands, which are accompanied with the sweet omnipotence of love: "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing is come." What singing is this? Not of *birds*, but of the Beloved. A rejoicing God is one of the glories of the Gospel. The Father makes merry over His long-lost Son, whom He has found and restored (Luke xv. 32). The Son rejoices over the sheep He has saved and secured (Luke xv. 5—6). Just notice this precious narrative: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, *until he find it*? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." That is the time of singing. It is the voice of a precious Christ rejoicing over His redeemed and rescued one. See how blessedly this is stated in Zeph. iii. 17: "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." Did you notice how this is, JEHOVAH rejoicing *over* and *in* His people? This sweetly agrees with the words, "and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." A singing Christ *for* thee, and a singing Holy Ghost *within* thee. The joy of the Holy Ghost in regenerate souls is better felt than expressed, in fact, its preciousness is inexpressible, yet by it we know the true meaning of the words, "*the time of the singing is come.*"

"*My dove.*" In terms of tenderest love the heavenly Bridegroom addresses the loved one of His heart; but she seems not to understand that His love is for her. This weakness only

serves to open up an opportunity for the display of His untiring patience and unfailing compassion. Are His loved ones forgetful of the lessons of His grace? He will make those blessed words of Mark x. 1 both power and life in their heart's experience, "*and as He was wont, He taught them again.*" If the tender language of fond affection fails to rouse them, He sends forth His voice of love with power, and owns His chosen and redeemed under the endearing title, "*My dove.*" The Lord has many reasons for thus addressing His people. The first we will notice is their *beauty*. Naturally they have none. But He beholds them clothed and adorned in His righteousness and comeliness. In resurrection and ascension oneness with Him He thus speaks of them, "Though ye have been among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of the dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold" (Psalm lxxviii. 13). In the second place we will notice their *innocence, purity and chastity*. Apart from Christ they have none of these, and left to the experience of what they are in themselves they mourn sore-like doves for the Spirit of their loving Mate. The poet Cowper knew something of this when he penned those precious, but much criticised words,—

"Return, O Holy Dove, return,
Sweet Messenger of Rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast."

In *fact*, that can never be; but in *feeling*, it is oftentimes the experience of the true-born children of God. Yet in the face of every painful and perplexing feeling, the witness of the Spirit shall hold good, that as Christ is in His perfections, so is His dove in the estimation of the Father. The dove is remarkable for its *purity*. When God owns a poor lost sinner as His dove, and the heart is moved by the gracious movements of the blessed Spirit, great searchings are sure to be experienced. I know it is so. I have sought for purity; but I have met with impurity. I have longed to be spotless in myself, when the seethings and surgings of indwelling corruption have sent me to my wits' end. I have prayed to be holy; but ever increasing depravity has seemed to swallow up my little hope. He calls me *dove*; I feel myself a *devil*. He calls me *His bride*; I feel myself a *beast*. Well, blessed be His dear Name, I am not what I oftentimes feel myself to be; but what He, my ever-loving Lord, declares me to be. All the purity I possess is found in Him, flows from Him, and is conveyed by Him to the apprehension of that nature which can be satisfied with Him, and Him alone. I love to behold Him in His suretyship engagements and performances for me. There I see all my sin, guilt, condemnation, and banishment borne by Him, and His purity, innocence, righteousness, and acceptance, made over to me. All the purity of His thoughts, purposes, and desires, *mine*. It is only thus

that He can say to me, *My dove*. Another characteristic of the dove is its *gentleness*. Am I gentle? The question causes me to quiver in the presence of incarnate gentleness. Let me be crossed in my natural desires and determinations, then all feeling of gentleness departs. Let me ask thee, friend, Where is thine? I anticipate thy answer. As my gracious Saviour and loving Redeemer is pleased to reveal Himself to me in all the fondness of His love as my Husband, saving me when I sinned against Him, bearing with me when I wandered from Him, heaping His gifts upon me when I had spent all, then I feel my hard heart to soften, my enmity to subside, and as He takes full possession of my heart, I am lost in His gentleness.

" His eyes are full of melting love,
More soft and sparkling than the dove,
And sweet instruction He conveys
To warm my heart and guide my ways.
A single smile from Jesus given
Will lift a drooping soul to heaven."

In gentleness He dealt with me all through my dark career of unregeneracy, and now I find it almost next to an impossibility to think of those two lines of Newton's without emotion.

" Determined to save, He watched o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

In gentleness He bore with His contentious, forgetful, and sinful disciples, and now He ever lives to plead with His Father for me, His poor, weak, wavering brother. Ye who are fathers here know what it is for all your gentleness to take flight when dealing with your wayward and wilful children, yet in all His dealings with you, your dear Redeemer is ever the same. He never changes, never falters. In the face of all hell's malignity in the days of His flesh, He could afford to be gentle out of pure love to His Father and pity for His Church, and in the sweet experience of spiritual oneness with Him, the chastened soul can look up and with guileless confidence say unto Him, "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psa. xviii. 35).

My dove. He thus speaks to His loved one, not because of any exuberance of its fleshly religious passions, but because of His own image reflected by Him upon it, and His own Spirit graciously breathed in it. Oh, my poor tried and tempted brother or sister in Christ, thou mayest feel thyself to be as black as hell; but He declares thee to be comely in His comeliness. Thou dost daily groan beneath the fell weight of thy rebellious nature, and own thyself to be a flagrant rebel against His authority, yet He calls thee not rebel, He calls thee *My dove*. A dove deserted of its mate expresses its sorrow in mournful tones. Tell me, ye who have enjoyed the sweetness of Jesus' company, are ye happy without it? When He is absent the sigh of your disconsolate spirit expresses to Him your anxious desire, "Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me?"

(Psa. ci. 2). In isolation and desolation He may leave thee to hang thy drooping head and groan, being burdened with the sense of thy manifold infirmities, yet thou art His dove. Any mourning ones here this morning? Yes. Some of you have come as mourning doves to the windows of His grace, seeking pure provision, and He will see to it that you are not sent empty away. He will feed you with His own pure truth. He will give you to know that you are pure in His purity, righteous in His righteousness, patient in His patience, gentle in His gentleness, and perfect in His perfections. What you may feel and consider yourselves to be in yourselves, His love is unalterable, and His language changes not. His address to this is, *O my dove*. The dove is a defenceless, harmless creature. It has no teeth to bite or devour, no claw to scratch, no hoof to kick, no sting to harm. But see! It has wings to fly. The Psalmist had an eye to this when he cried, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Psa. lv. 6). The children of God, in themselves, are utterly defenceless when enemies appear. Their whole strength is in Him to whom they fly in desire, prayer, hope and faith. They know something of the preciousness of those words of Miss Steele's:—

"When sins and fears prevailing rise,
And fainting hope almost expires,
Jesus, to Thee I lift mine eyes—
To Thee I breathe my soul's desires."

When Satan would grasp me for his prey, and drag me down to despondency and damnation, it is the very God of peace to whom my trembling spirit flies that will tread him under foot and shelter me. When imperious lusts seethe and surge within me, I find no security but in His gracious presence, who sweetly whispers, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

"*My dove*." The dove is a very fruitful bird. Am I fruitful? Alas, I often have to cry, My barrenness, my barrenness! When I would pray, I know not how. When I would trust, my spirit fails me. When I would hope, I am filled with gloomy forebodings. Yet the apostle prayed for the Philippian saints that they might be "filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (chap. i. 11). He also prayed that the faithful brethren at Colosse might be "fruitful in every good work" (Col. i. 10). There was a necessity for these prayers of the apostle which lay in the lack experienced in those he prayed for. Now look at Galatians v. 19—23. Here we see a contrast: the *works* of the flesh and the *fruit* of the Spirit. Works are met with wages, fruits with favourable acknowledgment. Works many, fruit one. JEHOVAH'S work is all of a piece from first to last. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Did you ever experience a little of His love. You cannot say, Nay. But you do say, I cannot produce all these. Who said you could? If any man says you can, he proves

himself to be ignorant of God's truth. Now the passage referred to does not say "*your fruit*," but "the fruit of the Spirit." As assuredly as the Spirit dwells within you, the fruit of the Spirit must be made manifest. Now to the acknowledgment, *I cannot produce all these*, I would ask, Did you ever meet with a person in whose life all the works of the flesh were manifested? It does not require all these in outward demonstration to make a reprobate. A man may be a drunkard and hate dishonesty; a man may be a thief, yet have a horror of drunkenness; a man may be a vile seducer, yet carry about with him an air of elegance and refinement. Will you look at truth by way of contrast? Thou mayest be a child of God with a little love in Thy heart, yet cut thyself off from all hope because of thy feeling lack of faith, and peace of God's own giving. Yet with the love you possess, you question its reality, and sigh,—

" 'Tis a point I long to know
(Oft it causes anxious thought),
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

This spiritual exercise is a blessed evidence of thy sonship, and that in thee "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." When the Master sees His own work in thee, He must acknowledge thee by the title of His own giving—"My dove."

I have met with those who could prate about the election of grace who have given lamentable proof of their knowing nothing of the grace of election. What think ye of that precious portion in Col. iii. 12? "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved." Holy in the Father's election of you before all worlds. "*Beloved*" of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "*Bowels of mercies*, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." I have known some persons of whom it has been said, "*Once offend them, they never forgive.*" Well, I would not like to stand in *their* shoes. It is a rich mercy God bestows upon us, when, however decided our convictions and actions may be, we cannot cherish a spirit of vindictiveness against any. "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful." "*Let.*" That is a new-covenant command which shall meet with the obedience of faith and love in the case of every elect vessel of mercy in God's set time of favour. Oh, what a marvellous mercy to be put into spiritual possession of the characteristics of Christ's doves, and all because He had a favour unto us, and because of the

kindness and condescension of His blessed Spirit who dwells within. When feeling the lack of the Spirit's inward movements, we cry and sigh,—

“Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all Thy quickening powers;
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours.”

When by the Spirit's sweet intercession our cries and groans ascend, the voice of the Beloved is wafted down to the spot of isolation and desolation. Like the Psalmist, I cry, “My Spirit is overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate” (Psalm cxliii. 4). My heart knows what it is to be desolate in a crowd. Evil influences, untoward circumstances, cross providences, Satan's temptations, and numberless earthly and infernal things combine to work desolation in the heart of the child of God; and as he looks around him and beholds the deceit, distress, and death abounding on every hand, he is cast into deeper gloom, and the desolation of his spirit is intensified. Yet a loving Lord forgets him not.

“*In the clefts of the Rock.*” We read in history of *the Rock of the Doves*, lying Southward of the Mount of Olives, which was the resort of thousands of doves. The Holy Ghost may have had respect to this when He inspired Solomon to write this precious portion. From the terrors of Divine justice, from the assaults of Satan, and from the persecuting attacks of men, the Church of God ever remains safe and secure in the clefts of the Rock of eternal ages. Yet her security provides no immunity from the exercises and sorrows of her wilderness state. When blessed with the presence of her Bridegroom, the inhabitant of the Rock can sing (Isaiah xlii. 11), and when fretting His absence, seasons of sorrow and mourning are her lot. That the Rock is JEHOVAH-JESUS, we have ample evidence from the experiences of His people recorded in His Word. Turn to Deut. xxxii. 4: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.” In the thirty-first verse, Moses adds, “For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.” Our Rock is Christ Himself. He is a high Rock (Psalm lxi. 2). In Him to the heights of covenant favour, His people are raised by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is a great Rock (Isaiah xxxii. 2). To His friendly shadow all His redeemed ones in all parts of creation swarm for rest and refreshment, shelter and security, when the hawk of persecution or the vulture of carnal enmity is preparing to pounce upon its prey. That is a precious Scripture in Isaiah xxvi. 4: “In the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength,” or, according to the margin, “the Rock of ages.” Toplady's hymn from these words is exceedingly precious to the living family:—

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

See! From the cleft in the Rock, from the riven side of a precious Christ, from the broken heart of Zion's Redeemer, flowed copious streams of blood and water. By His *blood* the precious sons and daughters of Zion are blessed with redemption, salvation, and justification. In the water they read their sanctification and purity. In these crystal streams of love, blood, and salvation, the doves of Christ behold and delight in their eternal and unceasing perfection and purity in Him. As our souls are blessed with the knowledge and enjoyment of these vast and glorious privileges, our spirits bow in adoring gratitude and profound humility, and sing with dear old John Kent,—

"Great Rock, for weary sinners made,
When storms of sin infest the soul;
Here let me rest my weary head,
When lightnings blaze and thunders roll.

"Within the clefts of His dear side,
There all His saints in safety dwell;
And what, from Jesus, shall divide?
Not all the rage of earth or hell."

Moses knew something of the stability of the Rock and of the security which it provided (Exod. xxxiii. 21, 22). The LORD placed him upon it; but as the overwhelming power of Divine glory passed by, security as well as standing was needed. JEHOVAH was not wanting when the fears of His saved one prevailed. Essential glory was too much for mortal eyes to behold, and mortality endure. In rich abounding grace, God took his poor, weak servant and put him *in* the clift of the Rock. There he could behold without dismay the glory of all the attributes of Deity. There he could enjoy, and delight in the companionship of his God, his Father, his Saviour and his Friend.

Oh, my dear friends, what a high privilege it is for us to know, and taste, and feel, that in the once broken and bleeding heart of our most glorious Christ, we have a full, free, and finished salvation, we have unceasing, unfailing and uninterrupted sympathy, we are blessed with infinite and inexhaustible supplies of heavenly grace and succour. In seasons of want, weakness, and weariness, it is a gracious privilege for the inhabitant of the Rock to hear the voice of Eternal Love saying unto it,

"O My dove, that art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

"M Y D O V E."

THE dove is gentle, mild, and meek:
 Deserve I then the name?
 I look within in vain to seek
 Aught which can give a claim.
 Yet, made so by redeeming love,
 My soul, thou art the Bridegroom's dove!

The dove, of all the feather'd tribe,
 Doth least of power possess:
 My soul, what better can describe
 Thine utter helplessness?
 Yet courage take! the Bridegroom's love
 Will keep, defend, protect His dove!

The dove hath neither claw nor sting,
 Nor weapon for the fight;
 She owes her safety to her wing,
 Her victory to flight.
 A shelter hath the Bridegroom's love
 Provided for His helpless dove.

The hawk comes on, in eager chase;
 The dove will not resist;
 In flying to her hiding-place,
 Her safety doth consist.
 The Bridegroom ope's His arms of love,
 And in them folds His panting dove!

As the poor dove, before the hawk,
 Quick to her refuge flies,
 So need I in my daily walk,
 The wing which faith supplies,
 To bear me where the Bridegroom's love
 Places beyond all harm His dove.

My soul, of native power bereft,
 To CALVARY repairs;
 IMMANUEL is the rocky cleft,
The secret of the stairs!
 Since placed *there* by the Bridegroom's love,
 What evil can befall His dove!

Though Sinai's thunder round her roars,
 Though Ebal's lightnings flash,
 Though heav'n a fiery torrent pours,
 And riven mountains crash;
 Through all, the "still small voice" of love
 Whispers, "Be not afraid, My dove!"

My soul, now hid within a rock
 ("*The Rock of Ages*" call'd),
 Amid the universal shock
 Is fearless, unappall'd.
 A cleft therein, prepared by love,
 In safety hides the Bridegroom's dove!

O happy dove, thus weak, thus safe;
 Do I resemble her?
 Then to my soul, O Lord, vouchsafe
 A *dovelike* character!
 Pure, harmless, gentle, full of love,
 Make me, in spirit, Lord, a dove!

S. R. M.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“MY DOVE.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
NOVEMBER 21ST, 1875, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“O My dove, that art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see Thy countenance, let Me hear Thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”—Song of Solomon ii. 14.

THE children of God while in the wilderness, though everlastingly saved and secure, are subject to many changes. Are they blessed with God given faith? They oftentimes falter. Do they possess a good hope through grace? They frequently waver. Is the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them? They repeatedly languish. Are they filled with joy and peace in believing? They know also what it is to mourn because of their oft felt emptiness and enmity. Though they oftentimes fail to enjoy their interest in their glorious Head, and in those spiritual and eternal blessings which JEHOVAH the Father has treasured up in Him for them, this affects not the love and affection of His heart for them. Those lines of Hammond’s are blessedly true:—

“Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same;
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows.”

Yes, that is true concerning us so graphically stated by Hart:—

“Sometimes sweet and sometimes sour,
Brisk and dull in half-an-hour.”

Ay, and in less time than that. One moment we may be mourning the blackness of our hearts, and the next rejoicing through the Spirit’s revelation of our comeliness in Christ. Now we experience conflict and confusion through Satan’s temptations;

then we enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding. *Now* we are tossed with tempest and not comforted; *then* we sail calmly upon the unruffled sea of uninfluenced love. Though we are ever changing, and Satan's devices seem to succeed against us, our gracious, covenant God is ever the same in His loving care and concern over us. Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, the Beloved of the Father and of His people, is

"THE SAME

Yesterday," from eternity; "*to-day*," with all its changes; "*and for ever*." This is God's testimony concerning His Christ. As the great and glorious Head of the Church stands in His unchanging perfections in the eye of the Father, so the whole of His members stand in Him. Satan may plan, scheme, and roar against the members of the one body, but all of them stand as perfect now as they did in the far back settlements of eternity.

"Thus in His eyes she ever stood,
From wrinkle and from blemish free;
Loved with the dateless love of God,
And blest by the Great Sacred Three."

In herself she is ever changing. In the person of her adorable Husband she knows no change. In His perfection she stands perfect. In His comeliness she remains comely. In His completeness she abides complete. John, by the Holy Ghost, gives a glorious statement of Gospel truth in his 1st Epistle iv. 17: "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world." When Satan, by his insinuations and injections, accuses, when conscience would condemn, when the world pronounces the sentence of condemnation, and when our own mother's children are angry with us and judge us, then we are bold in our God, knowing by the teaching of His blessed Spirit, that there is not one condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. It is our unspeakable mercy to know that as our Surety is up yonder, so are we down here. Satan may, and will question the reality of this glorious fact; but God's truth will stand when all Satan's lies are hushed in the silence of eternal darkness.

"*My dove*." The gracious Bridegroom oft-times meets His loved one in spots of isolation and sorrow. When the child of God realises not the approving smile of the best beloved, and doubts and fears with anxious cares abound, the season is one of gloom and mourning. The plaintive cry ascends from the depths of a disconsolate heart, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?"

"Tell Him, when you see His face,
I long to see Him too."

His presence is salvation (Psa. xlii., margin). His presence is security (Psa. cxl. 13). His presence is joy unspeakable (Psa. xvi. 11). In this favoured spot we rejoice to know that we are

inhabitants of the Rock of eternal ages. Saved, safe, stable.
Here we can sing with the German poet,—

"Rage as ye will, O ye portals of hell,
Safe in the Rock shall the ransom'd ones dwell."

The powers of darkness can never shake this glorious resting-place. In the metaphor we see durability and immutability set forth. Our salvation and safety in Him are eternal and unchanging. In Him we are raised to the heights of covenant favour, to the home, the throne, and the heart of the eternal God. In Him the sweets of divine sovereignty are enjoyed by those whose proud wills have been subdued by love and blood, and their chastened spirits love to speak to Him in those precious words,—

"More of Thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of Thine image let me bear;
Erect Thy throne within my heart,
And reign without a rival there."

While we are in the flesh, the influences which surround us will be the means of proving to us that sin, lust, depravity, and unbelief ever dwell in our members, while the blessed Spirit will teach us that none of these can ever have dominion over the new nature. That is a blessed Scripture found in Rom. v. 20, 21: "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." What glorious security and unfailing supplies of grace are ours in "the clefts of the Rock," the riven side of a dear Redeemer. We read of water out of the rock (Deut. viii. 15); honey out of the rock (Deut. xxxii. 13); and oil out of the rock (Job xxix. 6). Oil out of the rock! Who ever heard of such a thing? has been the exulting cry of the sceptic when attempting to throw discredit upon the statements of Divine revelation. Well, let infidels jeer and sneer, their triumph is but short. Scientific discoveries have proved the infidel a fool, and God's Word gloriously true. Spiritual truths are taught by natural facts. In Christ, the Rock of ages, we have "the oil of joy for mourning" (Isa. lxi. 3); the anointing of the Holy One (1 John ii. 20, 27). In Him we find the water of life and salvation (John vii. 37, 38). In Him we enjoy the honey, or sweets of divine communion. Every blessing which the child of God can need is provided in Him, as sweetly expressed in the words of Paul to the Philippians: "But my God shall supply all you need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (chap. iv. 19). We read in our text of—

"*The secret places of the stairs.*" There are Divine secrets which are unsearchable, for "the secret things belong unto the LORD our God" (Deut. xxix. 29). "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. xxv. 2). Those who are made kings and priests

unto God search for His mind and will concerning them, and, blessed be His Name, they shall not search in vain. There are family secrets which "none but Zion's children know." Our God communicates His secret to whom He will by the enlightening power of His blessed Spirit, and no sooner does the child of God realise that power but he begins to search for fuller revelations of His loving Father's will. Turn with me to Psalm xxv. 14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant," or, as you may read in the margin, "and His covenant to make them know it." What is this secret of the Lord? I believe it is not simply the communication of certain facts which are hidden from others, but the revelation of a glorious Person in the hearts of elect and redeemed sinners. In Judges xiii. 17, 18, we read, "And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (margin, wonderful). In Isaiah xlii. 6 we hear the Father saying to Christ, "I will give Thee for a covenant of the people." Thus we learn that God's secret and covenant is Christ. How much do we hear of the covenant in these days of profession? Very little. Oh, what hard and bitter things are said of the man who dares to be honest in the declaration of his Spirit-wrought convictions. Yes, cruel and lying things are said of him. But this is nothing new. The saints in days gone by had to put up with the same treatment from Satan's religious brood. Job received a severe scourging from the tongue of his free-will friend Eliphaz, as recorded in chap. xv. 2: "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge?" "Oh," say they of the same tribe now-a-days, "you should not be for ever dwelling upon things that happened before creation. You are always harping upon that old string of election. And then, it is not judicious your speaking so much evil of human dignity, and dwelling upon its depravity and incorrigibility; it is not wise. Look at the effect of such preaching." To such namby-pamby objections and taunts I answer, What have I to do with the effects of my preaching? I preach that which He gives me, and if the declaration of His glorious truth were to seal the condemnation of all Camberwell this night, I must declare it. Look at that slimy charge in the fifth verse, "*Thou restrainest prayer before God.*" This sounds like one of the charges of old Duty Faith. But what do such mean by prayer? Is it going through the precomposed prayers of the Church of England? Do not misunderstand me in this matter. There is many a godly minister who prays those prayers and does not prate them. What is prayer? It is the gracious movement of the Holy Ghost in the heart of an elect and redeemed sinner, creating the desire for blessings fore-ordained of the Father. Prayer is the spiritual expression of

felt necessity before the throne of the Heavenly Grace. "For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee." What crafty, lying insinuations. The wretched fellow was heaping up his own deceit and sin at Job's door, and doing the thing he was disclaiming. With such characters to deal with Job might well cry out, "Miserable comforters are ye all, forgers of lies, physicians of no value." Eliphaz proceeds, "Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills?" This is a crafty fling at God's predestinating and electing love, so blessedly set forth in Rom. viii. and Eph. i. Paul answers this vile Arminian question in 2 Tim. i. 9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." "*Hast thou heard the secret of God?* and dost thou constrain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou that we know not? what understandest thou which is not in us?" Mark you, Job had heard the secret of the Lord in a manner utterly unknown to his questioner. He was acquainted with the wisdom of God in a hidden, heavenly and spiritual manner, of which his three friends were destitute, hence their envy, jealousy, and hard dealing with one whose heart God had made soft in the furnace of affliction. Come with me to the twenty-ninth chapter. There is something exceedingly plaintive in the language, "Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through the darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle." There may be two or three here present who are passing through dark and dreary spots, whose plaintive cry ascends from the depths of your soul's troubles, "Oh, that I were as in days that are past, when I was indulged with a seat at my Lord's table, when all adversaries were shut out, when every accuser was silenced, and the justification of my person from all law charges, Satan's insinuations, and the world's reproaches, or all that from earth and might be brought against me." To all such mourners the declaration of the Psalmist is exceedingly precious, which cannot be affected by any change in their frames or feelings, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it." He will make them know it, for He has promised and pledged Himself to do it for them. Look at the last verse of John xvii, in which we see the determination of Christ to communicate the Father's mind and will to every one interested in His everlasting covenant of grace: "And I have declared unto them Thy Name, *and will declare it*: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." This is the communication of family secrets to all those who have a lawful interest therein.

I should like you to look again at Deut. xxix. 29: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." This is a favourite text on the lips of many opposers of God's sovereign truth, with which they taunt the tried and tempted children of God. "Oh," say they, "election, predestination, and God's foreknowledge are secret things to us, and it is ours to attend to those things which are clearly revealed." Wait a moment. Election, predestination, and foreknowledge, are truths plainly revealed in the pages of the written Word, and in the enlightened understandings of God's elect, yet they are secrets perfectly sealed to the world which lieth in the wicked one. Without the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, all the truths of Divine inspiration are hidden mysteries. We read in Isaiah xxix. 11, 12, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to one that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned." Learned and unlearned are alike ignorant of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. But turn now to Rev. v. 1—5, where we see John weeping at the inability of universal man to open the seven, or perfectly sealed book. "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." It is He, and He alone, who can unfold the secret things of JEHOVAH which lie hidden beneath the letter of the written Word. By His blessed Spirit He gives eyesight to the blind and takes of the things of the covenant and shows them to His own. It is thus the children of God behold a precious Christ in election, predestination, and foreknowledge. JEHOVAH has His incommunicable secrets, and His secrets of grace which He reveals to whom He will. This you see in Matt. xi. 25, 27: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." In Luke x. 21, we see the record that this was the only occasion of our Lord's rejoicing while here upon earth. Strange rejoicing this, according to the Arminian theory. Why did He rejoice? Not because everybody might know God's mind if they would; but because He hid His mind from some and revealed it to others. It is the prerogative of Jesus to reveal the Father's secrets to His hidden ones, against whom the wicked take crafty counsel. Covenant

secrets revealed to a covenant people, are sure to rouse the world's hatred. Our Lord acknowledged this to the Father in His prayer for His elect (see John xvii. 14): "I have given them Thy Word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." He stated this fact to His disciples when addressing them for the last time before His death. "If ye were of the world the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19). Sovereign election is at the root of the world's hatred to the Church of God, and not only so, but it was at the root of Satan's hatred to Christ, when he saw Him as God's first elect, set up as the Head and representative of grace. Pride and enmity brought the devil down from the heights of glory to the depths of perdition. These are solemn, but to the child of God, precious truths. We will now look at "*the secret of the stairs*." Stairs! What do these denote? Ascent, access, communication, and communion. Mark well God's order of ascent. From nature to grace, from Satan to God, from earth to heaven. We see something of this in Jacob's dream of the ladder. Turn to Gen. xxviii. 12: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." At the top of the ladder was JEHOVAH. On the ladder redemption messengers were seen, communicating between an elect people and an electing God. What is meant by this ladder? God's Christ, as He Himself informs us in John i. 51: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." God's Christ is the way of communication between earth and heaven. In the power of His incarnation, mediation, and intercession, He could say to His sorrowing disciples, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John xiv. 6). Look at the scene portrayed by the inspired pen—a watchful God, a sleeping Jacob. Art thou sleeping? Art thou weary? Does physical and mental fatigue steal over thee when thou wouldest listen to the truths of God's glorious Gospel? Blessed be His Name, thy weariness and dreariness alters not the love of thy covenant God to thee. But why this ladder? why these steps? Not for helpless sinners to scramble up. We have not a sentence, or a hint about Jacob putting a foot upon it; but we do see that angels ascended and descended. If it is not mine to climb it, how can I reach the home and the heart of my covenant God? See! There are His messengers to whom He has given a variety of titles. In 2 Cor. viii. 23 you will find this glorious one—

"THE GLORY OF CHRIST."

This is a title to which priests, so-called, and presumers can

never attain. It is thrust as a mark of distinguishing honour upon the truly ordained servants of the living God. Look at it! "The messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ." This they have, not by any will or wisdom of their own, but wholly of God. When, through their testimony, the exercised pilgrim hears the voice of the Beloved, and experiences a gracious lift out of sin, self, apathy and indifference, the heart rests in God's peace and enjoys the answer to its Spirit-wrought request,—

"Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood;
And bear Thy witness with my heart
That I am born of God."

In the clefts of the Rock of eternal truth, in the secret of the stairs, in the way of spiritual communion, the Spirit-taught messengers of grace are found. Sometimes they ascend in faith and hope, enjoying sweet fellowship with their Saviour and their God. Sometimes they descend in doubt and fear, experiencing doubt and dread in felt oneness with the tempted ones to whom they minister. If it were not so, how could they cheer and encourage poor weary pilgrims here below. I know it is so, for sometimes my faith appears to fade away to faithlessness, my hope droops to despondency, and my love languishes, apparently ready to die, yet He who has these in His own gracious hands will see to it, that the faith of His operation shall be strengthened, a good hope through grace shall be confirmed, and the love of His own giving fanned into a flame.

"*The secret of the stairs.*" In describing the descent of JEHOVAH to the spots of His people's necessity, we must begin where He begins. In doing so, we cannot do better than read the commencement of the preface to the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians and notice a few of the steps described in the chapter. *After the salutation and thanksgiving for the Ephesians, he treateth of our election and adoption by grace, which is the true and proper fountain of man's salvation. And because the height of this mystery cannot easily be attained unto, he prayeth that they may come to the full knowledge and possession thereof in Christ.* God's first step in love to His people in His eternal, unconditional, personal election of them is Christ Jesus. But this is only to be learned in secret with Himself—

"Though God's election is a truth,
Small comfort there I see
Till I am told by God's own mouth
That He hath chosen me."

BLESSING them with every spiritual blessing in Christ is another step. Before the worlds were framed the Father secured for them every needful blessing with which He would meet them in their journeyings and tossings to and fro in the wilderness.

REDEMPTION, particular and personal, is a step upon which God's loved ones delight to linger.

"Eternal, free, electing grace,
Redemption's bound'ry sets ;
And those whom Jesus died to save,
The Spirit ne'er forgets."

JEHOVAH had a perfect right to redeem His elect, and none other, from the awful consequences of the fall. Declare this to the world, and the declaration will be met with a torrent of abuse, hatred and vindictiveness. In the presence of this glorious truth "*universal charity*" loses itself in a rage. But "the redeemed of the Lord" glory in a redemption which is not temporary, but eternal (see Hebrews ix. 12): "having obtained eternal redemption for us." It is a precious redemption which cannot be affected by men, devils, time or eternity.

CALLING, effectual and irresistible, is another step upon which the elect and redeemed of God love to feel secure. Turn with me to Rom. viii. 28, 30, and mark well how the apostle writes in the present tense. "The called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate, conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, *them He also called*; and whom He called, *them He also justified*; and whom He justified, *them He also glorified*."

IMPUTATION is a step most cheering to the hearts of regenerate sinners. Here I see my adorable Surety with the whole of my sins heaped upon His sacred shoulders, enduring my death, and wading through the fierce fires of eternal damnation for me. By His love and blood He quenched those fires everlastingly for me. With this assurance I can sing,—

"What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine ;
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

The righteousness of my God and Saviour imputed to me. Free-willers and merit-mongers may blasphemously style this "*imputed nonsense*;" but if it be so, with all my preaching, praying, and striving, hell will be my portion. If imputed righteousness is not a truth of God's most Holy Word, banishment from the presence of the Lord will be my lot to all eternity. But imputed righteousness is a truth of God, and some of us have been led into the knowledge of the covenant secret. Read Rom. v. 19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." I thank God for that precious verse, 2 Peter i. 1: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us *through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*." This is the

righteousness wrought out for a people near and dear to Him, in which they appear before the eye of the Father everlastingly justified.

INTERCESSION. How blessed it is for us to be led step by step to behold the wonders of JEHOVAH'S electing, redeeming, justifying, and glorifying grace. Through death and resurrection our Lord and Master passed triumphantly to the mount of ascension-glory. "Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming," (1 Cor. xv. 23). Standing upon the hill of the Lord, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). When in our attempts to pray we fail, are shut up, and cannot come forth, we have One up yonder who in His never-ceasing and all-prevailing intercession, opens His mouth for us His ever failing ones. With the spiritual understanding of this we are able to say now and then,—

"Oh, look on Thine Anointed One;
Thy gift of Him is all our plea,
Our righteousness—what He hath done,
Our prayer—His prayer for us to Thee."

In Him, by Him, through Him, and with Him the whole of God's elect must spend an eternity in glory.

"*The secret of the stairs.*" In effectual calling the child of God experiences the first step heavenward and homeward. Until the implantation of divine life in the heart, every step is downward, away from God; but from the moment He begins His own good work of grace every step is upward. It may appear to some of you that every step you take is a retrograde movement. Do you know anything of this? I do, in the sorrows and solemnities of my soul. My God has taught me that "He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (Psalm cxlvii. 10). In all my goings I experience failure and shame. In all His goings forth for my salvation I enjoy perfection and confidence. I oftentimes look for mercy; but manifold miseries attend me. My mind is then anything but one with the mind of Him whom I have to do. Yet I feel and know that every motion of my mind must be wholly absorbed in His. How is this accomplished? When I was a youngster I knew by bitter experience that I was a sinner, perfectly unable to do anything towards saving myself. Frequently I retired to a secret spot and tried to pray. I failed, and found condemnation stamped upon my failure. Diligently did I read my Bible, and hated myself because of my ignorance of the God of the Bible. But when He was revealed to me in His immutability, and I was conscious of the immutability of my wretched nature, I trembled before Him. You may stare at that saying, "*my immutability.*" Yet it is painfully true. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can

be" (Rom. viii. 7). The carnal mind can never be improved, neither can it be worse than it is. But I wanted to improve it and bring it into subjection to God's law of love. In this I found my folly. The flesh was proved to be flesh, and a precious Christ was revealed to me as all my salvation and all my desire, in the glory of His person and the fulness of His love. He brought me step by step to enjoy the blessings of His covenant, and the love of His heart. He caused me to feel the hateful burden of my sins, and blessed me with His own sweet forgiveness. He made me groan under the hateful accusations of Satan, and led me to enjoy my perfect justification by the revelation of His spotless righteousness. He left me to myself, that I might experience my emptiness and misery, and then graciously drew me to Himself to enjoy my identity with Him and His fulness of grace and glory. Here I can bless Him for the secret ascent of the stairs, and for His carrying, sustaining love and grace.

"*My dove.*" Lord, can it be true? My natural mind is enmity against Thee, and my heart is reeking with corruption. To this He lovingly replies, "My love, My dove, My undefiled, there is no spot in thee. Though doubts and fears are many, in the clefts of the Rock thou art for ever safe. Though thy head may droop, and thy language is that of sorrow, thou art in the secret of the stairs; let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." What is there so precious in the eye of the ever-loving Bridegroom as the eyes of His bride, filled with tears of His own giving, because of her felt weakness and want of confidence in Him.

"When He inclines *her* heart to pray
He hath an ear to hear;
To Him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."

"*Let Me hear thy voice.*" This is the voice of prayer and praise produced by the gracious indwelling of God the ever-blessed Spirit. It is the longing desire of the heart after its Beloved which cannot find expression in words, but as He graciously draws them forth. "*Let Me see thy countenance.*" This is the countenance sad and dejected through a sense of sin, shame, and desertion. Yet our ever-loving Jesus delights to chase all these away with the light of His countenance, and gaze upon the comeliness of His own giving. Tell me, ye who know anything of earthly love, do the furrows upon the anxious face of a loved one, which are the unmistakable evidences of past suffering and present anxiety, lessen thy affection for her? Say, rather, do they not increase and intensify thy love? If this be so, how sweet must be the revelation of Christ's love to desponding, doubting spirits. Sweet, yea, most sweet.

"*Sweet is thy voice.*" As weary pilgrims speak of Christ to

each other during their wilderness wanderings, as loving *disciples* speak *for Christ* in their daily acknowledgments of His love, blood, and care, as spiritual worshippers speak *to Christ* in their prayers and praises, He hears the voice of His own sweet Spirit, and expresses His delight and satisfaction.

"Thy countenance is comely." In communion, the spiritual countenance of the child of God is bright with the reflection of the glory of Christ. There He sees His own faith which is His delight, and beholds His own love returning to Himself with desires and longings inexpressible. Here the kingly Bridegroom desires, draws, and delights in the beauty of His bride which He has put upon her, while she, in adoring gratitude, can sing of Him: "Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the LORD: for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a strong city" (Psalm xxxi. 19—21).

H Y M N.

WHEN overwhelmed with doubts and fear,
 Father, do Thou my spirit cheer;
 Let not mine eyes with tears be fed,
 But to the Rock of Ages led.

When guilt lies heavy on my soul,
 And waves of fierce temptation roll,
 When sick, or faint, or sore dismayed,
 Then let my hopes on Him be stayed.

When storms of sin and sorrow beat,
 Lead me to this divine retreat,
 Thy perfect righteousness and blood,
 My Rock, my Fortress, and my God.

Sheltered by Thine Omnipotence,
 What potent arm shall pluck me hence?
 On every side I'm guarded well
 With love and grace immutable.

High as my sins, yea, higher too,
 This everlasting Rock I view,
 Replete with free eternal grace,
 Made from of old my hiding-place.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY MORNING,
MAY 28TH, 1876, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—Ephes. iii. 8.

THE chapter which I have read for our instruction and edification presents to an untutored mind many difficulties, many paradoxes. The style and arrangement are not regular. In fact, there appears to minds precise, a total lack of arrangement; but to minds brought under the special guidance of God, the ever-blessed Spirit, to hearts subdued by Divine grace, and brought to acquiesce in JEHOVAH'S mind and will, there appears marvellous system and beauty. There is nothing crooked or perverse in any portion of God's most Holy Word, no superfluity, no want of order. "*Order is Heaven's first law,*" therefore we have it displayed in every page of God's inspired Book. Yet this order appears as disorder and confusion to the natural mind and carnal understanding. Inspired wisdom to the natural mind is foolishness. Through want of spiritual light and guidance many of the living family are left to flounder in the dark in respect to many portions of the Divine records. Nevertheless, His Word from the exercised heart of the Psalmist shall hold good in the case of every elect son and daughter of the Lord Almighty. Look at the commencement of this chapter. "For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." For what cause? That which he had stated in the immediate context, the latter part of the previous chapter. He says of those to whom he wrote, "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Oh! what a dreary distance, strangers to God. Oh! what blessed nearness, saintly citizens

and God's household. Can this be true of you and me this morning? It could once be said in truth of me, stranger to God, and now I can sing with the Spirit and understanding also,—

"I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger and felt not my load,
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU was nothing to me."

But some of us can look up with a little confidence into the face of a tender-hearted and pitiful Father, and in spite of our sins and corruptions say, Lord, we are no more strangers to Thee, but are strangers with Thee, and a secret something sweetens all the bitterness of our unbelief. We are no more strangers to Thy covenant love, or to Thy Spirit's gracious consolations. Thou knowest how we mourn because of the withdrawal of Thy sensible presence from us, while the language of our heart to Thee is, "Be not far from me, O Lord." We are no more strangers, but one with Thee in the Son of Thy love; no more strangers to Thy predestinating and electing favour, to the truth of the sovereignty of Thy will, and to the triumphing power of Thine uninfluenced and inexhaustible grace; "and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Notice those words, "*fitly framed*." In the eyes of JEHOVAH the Church has ever stood gloriously perfect, yet we are ever beholding imperfection. He sees not as man sees, for in His purpose of eternal love He beholds His Church perfect and complete. "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being *unperfect*; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them" (Psa. cxxxix. 16). Mark that word "*unperfect*," not *imperfect*. Imperfection cannot be found in God's work, though the Church will not appear in its glorious perfection to our eyes until the last vessel of mercy is gathered home, and the top-stone of the spiritual temple is carried with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it. He who drew the plan of His own temple will bring the whole to perfection, "in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The apostle never loses sight of the Spirit's person, work, and power in the rearing of God's habitation. "For this cause," having good ground to act and proceed upon, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ." Had the apostle been sent to preach the corruptions of his nature instead of the unsearchable riches of Christ, he would, no doubt, have said, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Satan or Nero;" but, standing upon ground prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost, he said, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ." The devil is here ignored; Nero is not acknowledged; a glorious Christ is All-in-all. The words, "*for you*

Gentiles," reminds me of those in Col. i. 24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings *for you*, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh *for His body's sake, which is the Church.*" These were not the afflictions of Christ in His flesh upon Calvary, which were perfectly filled up to the utmost of God's demands; but in Paul's flesh, while his risen and exalted Head was in heaven, all for the sake of the members of the one body. Turn with me to 2 Timothy ii. 10: "Therefore, I endure all things *for the elect's sake*, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Paul knew well by the Spirit's teaching that his sufferings were designed for the consolation of the suffering members of Christ, to whom he ministered. This is the burden of his testimony in 2 Cor. iv. Look at verses 11 and 12: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh; so, then, death worketh in us, but life in you." Death in the preacher is oft-times the life of the people. The minister's experience of the death of all creature power, wisdom, and utterance, is the opportunity for the display of God's sufficiency to the living members of his congregation. Oh, how I do feel myself a poor, helpless creature, dependent upon my covenant God for the very words with which I am enabled to preach His Word to you. Now look at Eph. iii. 2: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward." Here we see the apostle branches off from his subject. What connection is there between this and the first verse? None whatever. If we look at the portion written between the last word of the first and the first word of the fourteenth verse, we shall see that it is wholly parenthetical. It is well to notice these things, for by knowledge and instruction in the Word and doctrine of God, the souls of His people are fed and comforted. Let us look at this parenthesis: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward." It may be the mind and will of God, by these words, to chase away the network of spiritual darkness with which some minds are enshrouded in respect to His appointment of His own ministers. He sends them to labour in His vineyard and to minister to whom He will. The exact period of their ministry is stated and settled in His eternal counsels, and when the time arrives for their departure to their Master's home, the bereaved people are on the look out for a *fit successor*. But, it is very rarely a fit successor presents himself. Where was the man to fill the place of Toplady? Has Dr. Gill had a successor worthy of his name? Where will you find one so valiant for God's sovereign truth as William Parks, of Openshaw? In what quarter are you to find James Wells's successor? Has one to succeed Joseph Irons appeared? A *sweet, dainty mortal* has said, concerning me, "*He is not fit to hold a candle to Joseph Irons.*" Poor simpleton!

Who on earth has been so silly as to say that I was fit for so great an honour! The gown of Joseph Irons would not sit well on these shoulders. He who has the government of His Church upon His shoulders has irrevocably fixed the place, the time, the work of all His duly qualified servants. One cannot do the work of another, and anyone trying to do his own work after another's order will prove himself a miserable ape. God has graciously given me my work to do in the way of His appointing, and my earnest desire is, that I may be enabled to plod on in the spirit of my Master who pleased not Himself.

In Kings 1 xvii., we read of the prophet of fire appearing before Ahab and saying, "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." He acknowledged the upholding and sustaining grace of the covenant God of Israel. He testified that his God was the Fount and Communicator of life, who would uphold him until his work was done. Many times he experienced his weakness, and out of weakness he was made strong. He was strong to stand before the great ones of the earth. He was weak to sympathise with the widow woman of Zarephath. When His work was done the Lord took him to glory in His chariot of fire. Who filled his place? So far as the prophetic office was concerned, Elisha succeeded him; but what a contrast! Elijah, bold and fiery. Elisha, retiring and cool. They were the very opposites in disposition and doing. Every God-sent man has his own work to do, and neither men nor devils can prevent his doing it. We will proceed with the parenthesis.

"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." Paul, by the Holy Ghost, here lays the axe of divine truth at the root of that vain notion, that the Old Testament saints were not of the same body with those of the New Testament. We are asked to believe that there was no Church until the day of Pentecost; but here we are informed by the Holy Ghost that at Pentecost, all middle walls of partition were broken down and the elect Gentiles were made fellow-heirs, and of the same body with elect Jews who had been taken to glory. I know and feel that I am one with Abraham in these glorious verities. Concerning Abraham the Master said to the separating Pharisees, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). The Old Testament saints were saved, as we are, by the same Saviour, and were taught by the same Spirit. (See 1 Peter i. 10, 11.) "Of which salvation

the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time *the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify*, when it testified before-hand the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The apostle continues with his parenthesis, "Thereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power." He knew he was a Christ-made, Spirit-commissioned minister of the Word. There is much to admire in the humility of Paul. He lays claim to no higher office or title than that of minister. What is a minister? A servant, one who attends to the necessitous and the poor. This a glorious and honourable office. A poor mortal put in trust with unsearchable riches for God's poor and needy people. This is a precious truth which causes my heart to bound and laugh for joy at the thought that God has thrust so great an honour upon me. It has been suggested to me that it would be more judicious not to state God's truth so strongly and offensively. I look at such suggestors twice, and wonder what they mean. These do not want the devil to roar, and would have me try to please his *pious* brood, but I am inclined to think that can never be. The command has been given, "Preach the Word; be instant in season" (2 Tim. iv. 2). Let the pure Word of God be preached and He will take care of it, and by it cheer and comfort those for whom it is designed, and bring them to His own bright home in glory. Paul was made a minister not by human appliances or means, but by the supernatural, indefectible grace of his God. Not by man or of man, but by divine revelation and spiritual communication "according to the gift of the grace of God given into me." This looks very much like tautology, but by such means the Spirit will have the minds of the saints well tutored in the mysterious aboundings of JEHOVAH-JESUS' grace. Look still further: "By the effectual working of His power." Not by fleshly free-will power, learning, or knowledge, are Gospel ministers made, but by the effectual working of the resurrection power of Christ. A man who is spiritually conscious of this will declare God's truth in Christ's Name, and in the power of His might, not heeding Satan's roars or the hatred of his legions; but upon the glorious platform of eternal truth he cries, "If God be for us who can be against us!" (Rom. viii. 31). Look at the text.

"*Unto me.*" I have several times directed your attention to that spirit which never leads a man beyond the personal pronoun *I*. The make up of his life is displayed in *I—mine—me*. When he is in the pulpit, or in the pew; whether he is dealing with saints or sinners, self is kept prominently in view. When the law begins its searching, sifting work, *I*—that stiff, straight, stubborn *I*—which is human nature all over, is sure to assert itself. You see this in the oft asked question, "What must I

do?" But when the elect and redeemed sinner knows and understands his identity with a precious Christ, *I, mine, and me* are brought into subjection to His sweet law of love. We see this exemplified in the experience of the apostle Paul. Does he contemplate his labours in the Lord? He says, "*I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*" (1 Cor. xv. 10). Does he speak of his spiritual life? He says, "*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me*" (Gal. ii. 20). When fleshly *I* is swallowed and hidden from view by the overwhelming power and glory of God's Gospel, the favoured sinner can sing,—

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His 'house of wine':
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not even where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land."

Ask the bride of the Lamb, what sees she in herself? She will immediately answer, Blackness. But what is the communication of the Bridegroom to her heart? He sweetly whispers by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit, "*Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee*" (Song iv. 7). What! Can that be true? Ay, blessed be God it is, for sometimes when I cannot find a spark of life in my poor heart, He comes and sings His own sweet song of love to me. Then I know and feel the preciousness of those words,—

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face,
I will not gaze at glory,
But at my King of grace—
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

Look how blessedly that personal pronoun "*me*" appears in Solomon's Song vii. 10: "*I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me.*" *I!* the property of the beloved Bridegroom! "*Me!*" the object of His heart's desire. Association with Jesus begets true spiritual humility. We see this in Paul's description of himself in our text:—

"*Less than the least of all saints.*" What a blessed truth for any of us to know. "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility" (Prov. xv. 33). Spiritual privation precedes spiritual prosperity. Before the enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ there must be the experience of spiritual poverty. Before I delight in my standing

in Him, I must know of my fall in Adam. Now look at the converse of this: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 18). The living children of God know this to their heart's discontent and spiritual deliverance, while the children of the devil are left to feel it in their condemnation and ruin. In the book of Esther we see pride and destruction illustrated in Haman, while humility and honour shine conspicuously in Mordecai. Paul speaks of himself as "less than the least of all saints." What is a saint? He is a sanctified, separated, selected, and elected one. Chosen by the Father before all worlds to salvation, life, and glory. Separated by the Father before the foundation of the world, and separated from the world in regeneration by the sovereign power of God the Holy Ghost. Saints appear holy before God in the holiness of their great and glorious Head. He is their sanctification as well as their justification, and they, deriving and possessing a holiness in life-union with Him, stand in God's sight as holy as Christ is holy, and sometimes are privileged to know the preciousness of the words of old John Kent,—

"In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee!
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Look at Jude 1—"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to *them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.*" Sanctified in eternity, preserved through their unregeneracy, called by irresistible grace. Sanctified in the Person of Jesus as my covenant Head before I had a creature existence, and now brought to sing,—

"Preserved in Jesus when
My feet made haste to hell;
And there should I have gone,
But Thou dost all things well:
Thy love was great, Thy mercy free,
Which from the pit delivered me."

And

"Th' appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by grace;
Give a new heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill."

Here are the sanctified ones! Here are the separated ones! Here are the saints! separated *by* the Gospel of God, separated from the power of Satan, separated from the dominion of sin, separated from the love of self. Yet many of these are in perplexity as to their saintship. The exercised child of grace will oftentimes question himself thus: Can it be that I am a saint separated from those who hate my loving Lord and Saviour, yet in my daily avocation I find myself as deeply engrossed in this world's business as they? Let me ask those of you who almost daily walk the Exchange or tread the busy Mart, Do you not

frequently, in the sorrows of your soul, ask yourselves a few questions, such as these : If I am a child of God, how is it that I enter eagerly into the spirit of the world with those around me, with the same end in view, and oftentimes with little or no thought of heaven or home ? You know what it is, even in the midst of a crowd, to be the subjects of solemn inward searchings, and the confession is breathed to Him who created it and graciously receives it : Lord, my heart is deceitful above all things, a depth of iniquity, too deep for me to fathom, I cannot search myself ; Lord, search me and know my heart ; try me and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way, any *way of pain or grief*, or hindrance to myself or others, in me, and lead me in the way everlasting " (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24). In striking contrast to the fears which beset the saint, look at that precious Scripture in Deut. xxxiii. 3 : "Yea, He loved the people ; *all His saints are in Thy hand* ; and they sat down at Thy feet ; every one shall receive of Thy words." Safe in the hand of our covenant God all His saints are kept. The Apostle Paul knew and realised this as he wrote the epistle in which the words of our text appear. The hand and heart, the power and love of JEHOVAH are seen in every part of it. Each chapter reveals a distinct truth. In the first we have the Father's sovereign will and predestinating purpose. In the second we see Him working out that will and purpose in His works of grace for and in His people. They are dead, He quickens them ; they are far off, He brings them nigh to Himself ; they are broken down, He builds them up. In this third chapter we have the revelation of the mystery to the religious but unenlightened Jew that elect Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with elect Jews, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of life in Christ by the Gospel. With a spiritual and undying interest in these glorious realities, and with a spirit of profound humility the apostle declares, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given." There was no question in his mind as to God loving him when he hated God, to God quickening him with love and life when he was subject to enmity and death. He knew the truth of those words sung by the old Devonport dockyard labourer in after days, —

"Loved when a wretch, defiled with sin,
At war with heaven, in league with hell,
A slave to every lust obscene,
Who, living, lived but to rebel."

There was no Arminianism in Paul's creed or confidence, but gracious acknowledgments of the sovereignty and indefectibility of JEHOVAH'S saving and succouring grace. He rejoiced in the experience of the resurrection power of His Head and Lord, by which he was raised to the heavenlies to hold sweet fellowship with the Father by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and knew that the greater the revelation of the Father's grace the

deeper the sense of his unworthiness, the sweeter the manifestation of his Father's mercy, the more bitter the workings and surgings of indwelling sin.

"*Less than the least of all saints.*" See! We know by heart-felt experience what this means.

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall lie;"

yet, blessed be God, we know also,—

"That, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Unmeasurably high."

The more I am blessed with the experimental possession of heavenly treasure, the more I experience the pangs of spiritual poverty. Have you not noticed that order of spiritual progress stated in Isaiah xl. 31, concerning those who wait upon the Lord? They shall *fly*, they shall *run*, they shall *walk*. If man were left to arrange the pilgrim's progress he would begin with walking and end with flying; but the Holy Ghost states the very opposite, and says they shall fly first, then run, then walk. Ah, my dear friends, fleshly religion will brag of its *perseverance*; but the child of grace loves to boast of its *preservation*. What a divine and heavenly order—*downward* in self, *upward* in Christ. In tracing the history of Paul, you will see this fully set forth. He could say, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostle;" could also add, "though I be nothing" (2 Cor. xii. 11). When he was brought to contemplate his past conduct as a persecutor of the Church of God, he declared with all humility, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God" (1 Cor. xv. 9). A few years passed over his head and he is heard sighing, "Less than the least of all saints." As he drew near the end of his journey, with martyrdom in prospect, and glimpses of glory cheered his heart, he found himself lower than ever, and writing to Timothy, said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation"—that is, not a half-hearted acceptation—"that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Notice Paul's spiritual progress,—

"I am not meet to be called an apostle."

"Less than the least of all saints."

"Chief of sinners."

Where are we this morning? Oh, my dear friends, not worthy to take the precious name of our adorable Lord upon these polluted lips which have reviled Him in days gone by, not deserving the high honour thrust upon us of carrying about with us, like Ignatius of Antioch, the Lord our God. He was styled "The God-bearer," because of His reiterated declarations of Christ's being in Him, and He in Christ, and that Christ was the true God. This was vastly different to that blasphemous imposition of the Papists, who believe that a priest carries his

treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. xi. 26). *Riches* denote abundance, and the grace which the Father has treasured up in Christ for His people is far more exceeding abundant than we can ask or think. With all our unbelief we are rich in faith, for our faith is the faith of Christ (James ii. 5; Gal. ii. 16). With all our spiritual poverty and misery we are brought now and then to know and feel that "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. x. 22). He gives abundant grace (Rom. v. 17); abundant life (John x. 10); abundant pardon (Isa. lv. 7); and abundant peace (Jer. xxxiii. 6). The thought is appalling and overpowering to poor nature! Worms of the earth entrusted with infinite, inexhaustible, unsearchable, unutterable riches of grace and glory to dispense to the elect sons and daughters of men. It is of the Father's riches in glory that I know that I am represented before His face by One whose wisdom cannot err, whose strength cannot fail, whose love cannot alter, and whose resources can never be diminished. Because of all that He endured for me the sympathies of His heart are boundless, and the glories of the kingdom which He holds in possession for me can never be fully explored. "The unsearchable riches of Christ"—my God—my King. Papists, Socinians, and Arminians in heart know nothing of them. Professing to be rich they are poor indeed, while the tried and tempted followers of the Lamb are "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi. 10). Well might the apostle coin a word to describe his low estate, and indulge in the superlative to set forth the transcendent excellencies of our most glorious Christ.

Gracious Saviour, grant us Thy blessing. Amen and Amen.

HYMN.

CHRIST is my All, my sure Defence,
Nor shall my soul depart from thence;
He is my Rock, my Refuge too,
In spite of all my foes can do!

Christ is my All, and He will lead
My soul in pastures green to feed;
'Tis He supplies my every want,
And will all needful blessings grant.

Christ is my All: where should I go?
Without Him I can nothing do!
Helpless and weak, a sinner great,
Yet in His righteousness complete.

ADAMS.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
MAY 28TH, 1876, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“To the intent that now under the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”—Ephes. iii. 10.

WE read that He who loved us and gave Himself for us, and over whose sorrows we oftentimes mourn because we cannot love Him more, “Is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him” (1 Peter iii. 22). In the chapter succeeding that of my text we are taught, “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill”—margin, *fulfil*—“all things.” In chapter i. 20 we read that the Father has “set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” We read again in Psalm viii., “What is man, that Thou art mindful of Him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the fields; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.” Those who are not blessed with the teaching of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation for the acknowledgment of God’s Christ in this psalm, can see nothing higher than proud yet puny man, whom they style “the lord of creation.” And a pretty lord of creation he is. But when we look at that inspired commentary upon this psalm

redemption by Jesus Christ. Wherever the figure of the cherubim appeared, it always denoted the way opened by redemption to the throne, the home, and the heart of the Father. In the vail of the temple the figures of the cherubims were seen (Exod. xxxvi. 35). Seraphim has reference to the angelic host. In England's Te Deum we sing, "To thee, cherubim and seraphim, continually do cry." When JEHOVAH drove our first parents out of Eden, "He placed at the East of the garden cherubims, *and*," not *with*, "a flaming sword." The sword represents the justice of God, while the cherubims represent His redeeming love. Justice would stop the way to God because of man's sin. Love opens up the way through the bloodshedding and obedience of Christ. Time would fail me to point out the cherubs of Ezekiel's vision and other references to them, but this we know, He rides upon His cherubs, He makes Himself known through the ministry of mortal men whom He has redeemed, and comes riding upon the wings of the Spirit-wind with irresistible power to the hearts of His people. In looking at this parenthesis we see the nature of the instruments God is pleased to employ in communicating the mystery of redeeming love. Paul says, "Whereof I was made a minister," a ministering one of JEHOVAH, "according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to make all *men* see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Notice, the word "*men*" is printed in italics. God will have all those who were embraced in His purpose of love, who were chosen in Christ Jesus, and for whom He has designs of covenant mercy, to see and understand the glorious fact that He has *knit together His elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord*. He created this world by Jesus Christ, upon which to build His Church, in which He will be spiritually worshipped and glorified. In election and predestination His intention is expressed. In redemption and the proclamation thereof His intention is made manifest.

"*To the intent.*" God's intention of love has been ever hid in Himself, and He reveals it to whom He will. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants, the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). "He could not hide from Abraham the thing that He would do" (Gen. xviii. 17). "Blessed be His dear and gracious Name, His secret is with them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them know it" (Psa. xxv. 14). JEHOVAH'S covenant love is for ever kept secret and hidden from all but His own elect. To those upon whom His love was fixed before the worlds were framed He delights to

communicate His covenant secrets. In this matter it is our mercy to know that our God has a mind of His own. I admire a man who knows when to say Yes, or No, and stick to His word without any intention to do an injustice, or to wound the feelings of others. Our God has His "Yes," and His "No." His mind of love is all "Yea" to His elect, but "Nay" to all the reprobate out of the Son of His love. At the grand finale of this world the Shepherd-King will say to the sheep on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed." That is His *Yea*, while to the goats on His left hand He will say, "Depart, ye cursed." That is His *Nay*. Every acknowledgment of His own work in His people is His *Yea*. Every denial to the desires of my flesh is His *Nay*. With my wretched flesh He always deals in judgment, which is His *Nay*. With my redeemed spirit He always deals in purest love, which is His *Yea*. In all His dealings with His people He displays the sovereignty of His will, and many times my judgment declares them to be diametrically opposed to that which is right. But, mark you, "*whatever is*," is according to His will, and "*is right*." Turn with me to Ephesians i. 5: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." There we see His unchanging will. Read the ninth verse, "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself." You see He cannot go out of Himself for a reason why He should think or act for His people. Read the eleventh verse, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the council of His own will." Will that do for you? There we see predestination, revelation, and experimental possession of the inheritance of grace and glory in God, all according to His will, intent, and determination. In the midst of His afflictions and trials, dear old Job could say from Divine teaching, "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job xxiii. 13).

"*To the intent that now.*" The apostle directs the minds of the Ephesians to the accomplishment of God's purposes of grace and the revelation of the mystery of redeeming love in the hearts of His living elect. Satan has put many a false gloss upon this word, "*Now*." Impostors are found on every hand crying with frantic zeal to sinners dead in sin, "*Now* is the accepted time! *Now* is the day of salvation! *Now* is the time for you to be saved! Come *now*, come *now*." Ah, my dear friends, this is an awful burlesque of God's pure truth, a fearful perversion of His Word. Look at the portions referred to, 2 Cor. vi. 2, and Isaiah xlix. 8, and you will see God's "*Now*" has respect to His covenant dealings with His people in Christ Jesus, and to the openings up of the mystery of His love to quickened sinners. That is a

glorious *Now*, when the Spirit of Christ leads the soul into the enjoyment of God's love, God's life, God's light, and God's liberty. Look at it as it appears in Romans viii. 1, "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." When we are brought to the spiritual understanding of the latter part of chap. vii., we rejoice in the fact that there is no goodness in us to influence God to love and save us, and that our unmitigated badness can never move Him to hate and damn us. Oh, cry out the demented disciples of Arminius, that is an incentive to licentiousness. But these know not what they are talking about. Though with my mind I serve the law of God, and with my flesh the law of sin, yet neither my goodness nor badness can influence Him to vary in His love. Satan may worry and sin may perplex, but "no condemnation" is unceasingly true concerning all the election of grace in Christ Jesus. "Like as a Father pitieth His children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him" (Psa. ciii. 13), and this fear springs from vital union to the Lord Jesus Christ. *Now*, throughout this dispensation of grace there is "no condemnation" to the living in Jerusalem, and when we experience this grace in our hearts we enjoy a blessed immunity from the guilt, plague, and power of sin, and from all fear of death and damnation.

"*Unto the principalities and powers.*" These are spiritual intelligences invested with authority and ability. The apostle styles them "elect angels" (1 Tim. v. 21). Are there any Arminians here? Do not find fault with Paul for giving them this title. According to God's election of them they stood in all the glory of their first estate, while others as reprobate kept not their *principality*, but left their own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day (Jude 6). Of the angels, who by grace maintained their *principality*, Toplady sang so sweetly,—

"Thy ministering spirits descend
To watch while Thy saints are asleep,
By day and by night they attend,
The heirs of salvation to keep :
Bright seraphs despatched from the throne,
Repair to the stations assigned,
And angels elect are sent down
To guard the elect of mankind."

The ministry of angels is a precious theme, a glorious truth of God's written Word, and a gracious reality in the experience of His people. Because of the base corruption of this subject by the Romish and other confederacies against God's truth, many decline from entertaining the subject: but let such remember that it forms a part of Divine revelation. That gross abuses of this fact did exist in apostolic times we have the authority of Paul in Col. ii. 18: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by

joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Those who advocate, and contend for, the worship of angels, are wholly under the delusions of Satan in the matter, intrude into matters which are too high for them, and are puffed up with fleshly conceit. We worship them not, but we acknowledge their existence, ministry, and sympathy. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14). Certainly. They are ministers, not masters. All their movements are in subjection to our great and glorious King. Turn with me to Psa. ciii. 20, 21: "Bless the LORD, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye His hosts; ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure." Here we see them subject to JEHOVAH'S authority, and waiting for the issuing of His commands by the voice of His Word. What Word is this? That Word by which the worlds were framed (Heb. xi. 3), by which life is imparted and maintained (Heb. iv. 12), the living and life-giving Word in glory *for me*, and by grace *in me*. Bright, glorious, and spiritual intelligences wait the bidding of our adorable King Emmanuel. As He commissions and commands they fly with marvellous swiftness and accomplish His bidding, and their ministrations draw out our hearts in worship to Him. There are seducing spirits who tell us we should not pray to Christ but to the Father through Him. To all such I say, Get off with you, and torment me not with your vile seductions. I love to speak to my Christ, and it is the delight of my heart to know that He speaks to me. If Stephen could look up amid a murderous shower of stones, and see our blessed Lord standing at the right hand of the Father, while his ransomed soul cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," surely I cannot be wrong if I cry, Lord Jesus, preserve my spirit—keep my tongue, keep my temper, and work in me that which is well-pleasing in Thy sight to the glorification of Thy Father, Thyself, and Thy blessed Spirit. But let us proceed with our subject. Turn to that record of angelic ministry in Dan. ix. 20, 21: "And whiles I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." Mark you, Daniel presented his supplication, not like the Papists to the angels, but to the LORD his God. "And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand

the matter, and consider the vision." Here we see the truth that angels are waiting the beck, the nod, the command of that blessed One whom we own as our Saviour and our God. Is Israel persecuted in Egypt? The angel of the Lord destroys the firstborn of the Egyptians (Exod. xii.). Do the Assyrians threaten to besiege Jerusalem? "The angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand" (Isa. xxxvii. 36). Does Herod taunt the Church by proclaiming himself a god? "The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (Acts xii. 23). Is Daniel cast among lions? An angel preserves him (Dan. vi. 22). Is Peter in prison? An angel delivers him (Acts xii. 7—9). Is Paul in distress? An angel defends him (Acts xxvii. 23). I wish you now to notice that characteristic word of this epistle,—

"Heavenly places." We shall find it used five times.

1. The place of spiritual blessing. Chap. i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."

2. The place of spiritual power. Chap. i. 20: "Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly *places*."

3. The place of spiritual fellowship. Chap. ii. 6: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly *places*."

4. The place of spiritual revelation. Chap. iii. 10: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

5. The place of spiritual conflict. Chap. vi.: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *wicked spirits* in heavenly *places*."

In the heavenlies all the elect of God were blessed before all time, are invested with power in time, are brought into the enjoyment of fellowship with the sacred Three-in-One, are made the subjects of special revelations, and wrestle hard with the powers of darkness. In this sacred and solemn place the angels who have never sinned learn from redeemed ones, who have sinned, the mysteries of redeeming love. I love to dwell upon that glorious contrast between Sinai and Sion drawn by Paul in Heb. xii. 18—24, especially the 22nd verse: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of

the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*." See! "*To an innumerable company of angels*" in the *heavenlies* the living children of God are come. The servant of the prophet Elisha saw this when the Lord opened his eyes, and his master appeared surrounded with horses and chariots of fire (2 Kings vi. 15—17). In the *heavenlies* the angelic host watch their Maker's bidding, wait for His nod, and learn His will. Turn with me to 1 Peter i. 11, 12: "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; *which things the angels desire to look into*." Mark that! They desire to look into, learn, and understand the things of Christ—the mysteries of redeeming love. And while their minds are up to their great and glorious Creator, He teaches them that redemption mysteries must be communicated to them by the Church. This is a vast height of privilege to which the Church of the living God is raised, and especially those of it who are "the messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ." From mortal lips angelic minds drink in eternal truth. It was the joy of the soul of Toplady to know that when he preached to the few at Broad Hembury, angels formed part of his congregation. And who of us dare say that angels hover not about this sacred spot to learn our Father's will from our songs of redeeming love—to understand His covenant from our acknowledgments of His salvation and succour? It is a mighty and majestic truth that the cries and sighs of the weakest in the flock of the good Shepherd call forth the admiration of those angels whose privilege it is to hear them. Do not think this favours the vain notion of praying to angels or departed saints, for such it really does not. Angels learn from the redeemed, but the redeemed pray not to angels. Look at those marvellous words—

"*Might be known by the Church*." What is the Church? The Romanist will tell you that his dark system of ignorance and idolatry is the Church. The Anglican presumer will contend that the Establishment, or those long-frocked gentry, erroneously styled "*the clergy*," who are hateful to God, the makesport of devils, and contemptible in the judgment of every sensible man, are the Church. Ask these what they believe, and all they can really give is expressed in the replies of a poor deluded Papist, who, when asked "What do you believe?" said, "I believe what the Church believes." "And what does the Church believe?" "The Church believes what I believe." "And what do you and the Church believe?" "The Church and I believe one and the same thing." What is the Church?

"The angels' Lord Himself is nigh
To them that fear His Name;
Ready to save them when they cry,
And put their foes to shame."

May He grant unto you and to me brighter and more precious revelations of this glorious truth, that our hearts may cling more closely to, and confide solely in Him. And to Him be rendered all the adoration, service, and worship of our redeemed spirits now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN.

ANGELS heard, with admiration,
How the eternal counsel ran;
Wondered at the great salvation,—
Wondered at the gracious plan;
Angels wondered
At the love of God to man.

Angels with profound amazement,
Saw th' eternal King come down;
In the time of His abasement,
Saw the Saviour stand alone;
Angels saw Him,
Then deserted by His own.

Angels saw the Saviour dying
On the cross, in love to men;
Angels saw His body lying
In the tomb among the slain;
O! how awful
Sin appeared to angels then.

Angels saw Him rise victorious
From the tomb in which He lay;
Never sight was seen more glorious
Than what angels saw that day—
When the Saviour
Rose, and death resign'd his prey.

Hark! what bursts of acclamation
Through th' eternal arches ring;
Angels now ascribe salvation
To the everlasting King;
Loud their praises—
"Glory to the Lamb" they sing.

Praise the Lamb, ye saints adore Him,—
Ye for whom He shed His blood;
Bow with angels, bow before Him,
Make His glory known abroad;
Saints and angels
Join to praise the Lamb of God.

KELLY.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

LITTLE SPACE, BUT GREAT GRACE.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
FEBRUARY 6TH, 1876, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And now for a little space grace hath been showed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage."—Ezra ix. 8.

THE certain effect of divine grace in the life of an elect and redeemed sinner is separation from all that opposes itself to the Christ of God. The heavenly and the earthly cannot unite. The spiritual and the natural cannot agree. God and the devil cannot meet. Heaven and hell cannot harmonise. Light and darkness cannot commune. Christ with Belial hath no concord. The spirit and the flesh cannot fraternise. Living saints and dead sinners have nothing spiritually in common. Separation between the elect and reprobate characterised the covenant of grace; separation between life and death was seen in God's creation; separation between earth and heaven is known and felt in the new creation. The call of God's children from darkness to light, from death unto life, is better felt than expressed or explained. We hear much of the doctrine of sanctification, but very little is understood of its true and spiritual meaning, and none can understand this grand and glorious mystery but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is set before us in its sevenfold or perfect aspect in the New Testament. The popular and erroneous view of this is that it is a consequence of experimental justification in the court of conscience; but we find from God's most Holy Word, and its clear elucidation in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that it is God's work previous to any work wrought in us—ay, before ever we had an actual creature existence. I fully believe in the perfect justification and sanctification of the Church in the person of her great and glorious Head from all eternity. Do you ask me where I find

this? I answer, in the first verse of the Epistle of Jude, and expounded by the Master throughout that blessed seventeenth of John. God has revealed, in the New Testament Scriptures, the sevenfold, or perfect, sanctification of His people. Look at it.

I.—Jude i.—“Sanctified by God the Father.”

II.—1 Cor. i. 2.—“Sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

III.—1 Peter i. 2.—“Sanctification of the Spirit.”

IV.—John xvii. 17.—“Sanctify them through Thy truth.”

V.—Acts xxvi. 18.—“Sanctified by faith that is in Christ.”

VI.—Heb. xiii. 12.—“Sanctified by His own blood.”

VII.—1 Thess. v. 23.—“Sanctified wholly.”

By JEHOVAH the Father the whole Church was sanctified before all worlds, when, by a sovereign act of His love, He chose them eternally to Himself. In this we see election, selection, separation and sanctification. It is important to know that JEHOVAH can never go out of Himself for a reason to act in grace even to His own. Therefore we find them “sanctified in Christ” (1 Cor. i. 2). This is the Father’s act of handing over the elect to their gracious Head, who held Himself responsible for their eternal salvation and security. In the fulness of time they are sanctified by the Holy Ghost (1 Peter i. 2), which to the living in Jerusalem is a marvellous mystery of grace. Some fix the precise moment when they were sanctified by the Holy Ghost; but I for one call into question their ability to do this. I do not question their sanctification, but I question their knowledge of the date of its commencement. In this matter the Holy Ghost is a Sovereign, and I believe that none can tell the day or the hour of His first movements in them. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John iii. 8). That marvellous man, who was so mighty in the Scriptures, William Huntingdon, believed that the Holy Ghost had a special concern over elect vessels of mercy from the natural quickening in the womb to the spirit’s entrance into glory. If this is not so, what are we to make of such precious portions as the following: Psa. xxii. 9, 10, “But Thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother’s belly.” Mark well Psa. lxxi. 5, 6—“Thou art my hope, O Lord GOD; Thou art my trust from my youth. By Thee have I been holden up from the womb; Thou art He that took me out of my mother’s bowels: my praise shall be continually of Thee.” Look at JEHOVAH’S glorious promise to the whole of His elect and redeemed pilgrims, as recorded in Isaiah xli. 3, 4, “Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by Me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am He: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made,

and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." We have the cases of persons recorded in the Scriptures illustrating this stupendous truth. The eternal Word said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee: and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 4, 5). We have this truth declared concerning John the Baptist in the angel's words to Zacharias in Luke i. 5, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Then comes the testimony of the Apostle Paul (in Gal. i. 15, 16), "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The sanctifying grace of JEHOVAH the Father, and of JEHOVAH the Son, in covenant acts, must be known and felt by the sanctifying power of JEHOVAH the Spirit in regeneration, restoration, and confirmation. This is expressed in the Redeemer's prayer, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth" (John xvii. 17). In these words we have the means which God employs for the experimental sanctification of His elect—His Truth—His Word. He knows nothing of truth apart from Christ. He makes no communication of His grace and life but by the Son of His love. It is by the preaching of the Word and the declaration of new covenant truth that the Father is pleased to beget precious faith in the hearts of His people. This we see in Paul's defence before Agrippa in Acts xxvi. 16, 18: "But rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among *them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me*," You see from this, that the mere ordination in the first sending out of ministers is not sufficient for them. They must know repeatedly their necessities and weaknesses, and the appearing and re-appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ as their only source of supply and strength. It is He alone who can deliver them from the people. From what people? Not only from the rage of ungodly reprobates, but from the crafty devices of hypocrites who are invested with brief authority in the midst of His gathered ones who are sanctified by faith that is in Him. Do you notice that? There is no true faith out of Him. This is in perfect accordance with the testimony of the apostle in Galatians ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, *I live by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Paul knew not what it was to boast of his own faith, or of anything out of Christ. Glorious, perfect sanctification! By the Father—in the Son—through the Spirit—through God's truth, by the faith of Christ, and according to Hebrews xiii. 13, Jesus sanctifies the people with His own blood. His precious atoning blood, applied to our hearts by the Holy Ghost, gives us to know and feel our oneness with Him in justification, sanctification, redemption, and glory. This brings to light that truth which is universally hated by unregenerate men, *particular redemption* (see Exod. viii. 23), "And I will put a division (margin, redemption) between My people and thy people; to-morrow shall this sign be." In this is prefigured the sanctifying, distinguishing, and discriminating power of the blood of Christ. Against this truth Satan rages, his brood scouts it, and the carnal mind cordially hates it. We now come to the seventh and last point, as stated in 1 Thes. v. 22, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" when you and I shall have done with earth, and self, and sin, and are eternally shut in with Him, we shall fully know and realise our complete and perfect sanctification in Him, the Son of the Father's love.

But why have I thus spoken of the doctrine of sanctification? Because it was the knowledge and power of this truth that brought Ezra and every one that trembled at the Word in Jerusalem in true humility before their God. In chap. ix. 1 we read, "Now, when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the land, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands; yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." False liberality characterised the walk and conversation of the Jews, and disregard of divine commandments had wrought confusion in Israel. See how the Apostle Paul combats this spirit in 2 Cor. vi. 14—18, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Custom has almost robbed this injunction of its pith and power by restricting it to the state of matrimony. The apostle was writing to the elect, sanctified, and separated people of God at Corinth, many of whom were swallowed up by a spirit of worldly conformity. It is no small mercy for the Lord to unite in matrimony two who are "heirs together of the grace of life," and it is a miserable affair for a living saint to be yoked for life to a dead sinner; but the unequal yoke is not restricted to the marriage bond. These injunctions of the Holy Ghost by Paul follow me

into every relationship of life, and teach me that as a pilgrim separated from the world and worldlings, to the service of Him who loved, chose, redeemed, and quickened me, it is mine to have no other god but Him. I see this truth revealed in shining characters throughout the pages of Divine inspiration. Men possessed of a wanton, adulterous religious spirit, may call me crude, eccentric, and narrow, but while God continues to say to me by the Holy Ghost, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," men may say whatever they like. I have been much struck with the words of the seer to Jehoshaphat in reference to his unwarrantable alliance with the wicked Ahab, even for an apparently religious purpose. You will find them in 2 Chron. xix. 2, "Shouldest thou love the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from the LORD." Look at the case of Josiah as recorded in 2 Chron. xxxv. 20—24. He was counselled by God not to join himself with Charchemish, king of Assyria, and heeding not the counsel he was shot dead by the archers of Necho, king of Egypt. Disorder and confusion was thus wrought in Israel through Josiah's disobedience to the Divine command, prohibiting him from contracting an unequal yoke. We cannot forget to mention the case of Zerubbabel, when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin said to him, "Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhaddon, King of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chiefs of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God: but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel." Do you find much of that spirit in these days? Indeed, you do not. Look at the professing Church. Compromise with error, and conformity to the world are apparent on every hand. The hands of the leaders are not clean, as indeed they cannot be when their hearts are not right with God. Churches, chapels, and meeting-houses seek the patronage of lords, ladies, dukes, earls, merchant princes, lord mayors, and aldermen, who know not God, hate His truths, and despise His people. Do not imagine that I am desirous of speaking evil of dignities, for I am not. These are very well in their own place, but fearfully out of their own place when they are brought to patronise that which their souls cordially hate. I delight to yield honour to whom honour is due, custom to whom custom is due, and to own a predestinating providence in the varied stations of life; but to bring proud princes, dead dukes, and lewd lords to fraternise with heaven's aristocracy is to commit the very sin which caused Ezra to say, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up to the heavens." Spiritual separation is of divine appointment. If the children of the living God are

associated with the children of the devil they will be sure to smart for it. If elect sheep are tied to reprobate goats, as assuredly as God is true, the goats being the stronger will drag the sheep with them from the green pastures to starve among the thistles. In this matter I know it is possible for a living child of God to fall from his discipleship, and lose his peace of mind, while his standing in Christ remains unchanging and unchanged. Read the whole of Paul's entreaty: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." If we are blessed with the knowledge and enjoyment of our oneness with Christ—He in us and we in Him—He will look through our eyes, speak through our words, and appear in our walk. I do not say this in a free-will spirit to taunt or to tease any poor weakling here; but I do wish to be an instrument in the hands of the Master, to forget the things which are behind and reach forth unto those things which are before, and press, with those I love, toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 13—14). If I am a temple of the living God, and am brought to prove the indwelling of the Spirit by my looks, acts, and testimony, He will be sure to bless some of His tried ones with a gracious lift by the way. Some of you may feel sighs rising in your troubled spirits with the consciousness that to-morrow's dawn will bring you into contact with the worldling and the reprobate in your business pursuits. Well, cheer up, my friends, He who has ordained the pathway of His child will take care of His child therein. We will read on: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." I have heard this quoted oftentimes for the purpose of drawing godly ministers from the spots provided for them by an unerring Providence to other spheres, evidently not designed for them. It has no reference to anything of the kind. The Church of Corinth, the members of which are addressed in these words, was most corrupt and disorderly in practice, yet none are enjoined to come out of the Church. The Galatian Churches are corrupt in doctrine, yet the members thereof were not counselled to come out of them. Sectarians might cry in vain to the God-sent ones in the establishment, Come out, Toplady! Come out, Hawker! but, blessed be God, they tarried in the midst of the corruptions they lamented, and He kept them there until He carried them in His arms of love to His own bright

home in glory. Oh, my dear friends, I know nothing of fleshly separations or carnal distinctions, and in whomsoever He is pleased to manifest His life, there I am bound to acknowledge His hand, and to own His gracious work. How blessed it is for us to know by His love shed abroad in our hearts, and His fear ruling our understanding, that the Lord has separated us to Himself and caused us to glory in the sovereign power of His blessed Spirit demonstrated in the separation of His loved ones from the world and its wiles. Mark you, this separation is God's work, not ours. What He does is well done. Moses knew this when he said to God, "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Exod. xxxiii. 16). Look at the precious words of the text. They commence with that interesting word "*Now*." God's living children are greatly in love with present tense blessings. They know, spiritually, the meaning of the old proverb, "*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*." You see how that is illustrated in the case of dear old Simeon, when he took the Lord's Christ, the infant Jesus, in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." With Christ in experimental possession the soul is ready and eager to fly away home. Turn with me to Romans viii. 1, "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Now!" When? Mark you, there must of necessity be the experience of Romans vii. before you can enjoy the blessedness of the eighth chapter. Notice the biting and bitter truth of the last verse of chapter vii., "So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Let a man declare that truth now-a-days, and he will be set down as a thorough-paced antinomian, and a hyper of the first water. I hate these terms, yet when thrown by the enemies of God's truth at the living in Jerusalem, I accept them as badges of honourable distinction. Look at the latter part of Romans vii., and may God give you a right judgment and understanding therein in His faith and fear. After expressing the painful discovery that the flesh contained and could produce no good thing, the apostle cried, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then comes his assurance of deliverance when he shall have done with the flesh, and the conviction that his flesh could never do anything but serve the law of sin. It is a terrible truth, but, driven to know and feel it, the apostle hesitated not to declare it. Being brought to see and feel an end of all creature perfection, his constant theme was CHRIST, ALL OR NOTHING. Christ first, Christ last, Christ everything. As I thus behold Him I am constrained to sing,—

"The more Thy glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie;

Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Unmeasurably high."

Do I see His beauty? I mourn my own depravity. Do I see His comeliness? I mourn my hateful deformity. Do I feel His love? I hate the enmity of my carnal mind. Do I experience His patience and gentleness? The more I loathe myself because of my peevishness and rebelliousness. As I am favoured to enjoy the melting power of His love in my own bosom the more I am constrained to see of the utter incorrigibility of my nature. John saw Him in His glory and fell at His feet as a mass of corruption (Rev. i. 17). Paul had known His precious Saviour for many a long year, yet his old nature could do nothing but serve the law of sin. Satan will work upon this in the bitter experience of the child of God. He will taunt him with insinuations, such as these: *Years ago thou didst profess deliverance from thy old corruptions; but here they are as fresh as ever.*" Oh, what a liar Satan is. His worst only drives the child of grace near to its Father, the wandering sheep to the gentle Shepherd's arms, the mourning Zionite to enjoy the consolations of the Spirit. Such exercises are ordained to bring the children of God to know that in themselves there is nought but corruption; and nought but incorruption in a precious Christ.

"*A little space.*" I love that word "*little*" as it flows to me from God's mouth. It embraces a vast deal. I love God's "*littles*," for they contain more than I shall ever be able to comprehend. God says to the Church, by the mouth of Isaiah, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a *little wrath* I hid My face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv. 7, 8). The living children readily confess, in the language of Paul, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (1 Cor. iv. 17). But the *little* of the text is in connection with the enjoyment of JEHOVAH'S grace, and here we may well ask, "Who hath despised the day of small (or *little*) things?" (Zech. iv. 10). God's little ones rejoice in the little they receive, because they are little in their own esteem. Some of us are thankful to be raised to a little hope, to be blessed with little faith, to experience a little love, and with a little confidence to sing,—

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids *us* still seek.
His Spirit will cherish the life He first gave;
We never shall perish if Jesus can save."

The seasons in which we enjoy the presence and blessing of our covenant God are but short. The breathing spaces in the midst of our anxieties and cares, are little indeed, It was the experience of this that caused Hart to sing,—

"More frequent let Thy visits be,
Or let them longer last;
I can do nothing without Thee;•
Make haste, my God, make haste."

And here I am reminded of a sweet spot in my experimental wanderings. I do love to look back upon the sweet, yet mournful spots where my God has been pleased, in richest grace, to bless me with communion with Him in company with His suffering people. Well do I remember one Saturday afternoon, walking with my now glorified friend and father in the faith of the Gospel, Patrick Joseph O'Leary, when he said to me, "The Lord bless you, my dear friend. I was very low in spirits, and was despairing of finding even a little comfort; but God has been so kind. He knew the words suited to my desolate heart, and directed every step of your feet to-day, to meet me, a poor sinner. Now and then, here and there, God cheers me with a sense of His love. He comforts my heart as I turn the corner of the street; but it lasts not long, *only the length of the corner.*" Oh, my dear friends, this was *great grace* in a *little space* of time, and exactly corresponds with the work of God in my own heart. During such short seasons we receive great encouragement and sweet foretastes of an eternity of bliss and blessedness in the presence and embrace of our God.

"*Grace hath been showed from the LORD our God.*" My first thought upon reading these words, is to sing,—

"Grace! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear!
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear."

There is a verse upon this precious theme, by good old John Newton, which I love exceedingly. Why? Because I once heard the valiant William Parks, of Openshaw, quote it with an overflowing heart and streaming eyes, which nearly broke me down. Here you have it:—

"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found:
Was blind, but now I see."

Nothing but grace will suit such poor wretches as we find ourselves to be; and when enjoyed, we love to soar away from earth, and self, and sin. Grace to me was purely uninfluenced, for there was, and is, nothing in me to call forth the notice of Israel's covenant God. It is also *invincible*. When I was deep down amid the ruins of the fall, beyond the reach of all human means, grace sought me and found me. When mountains of guilt and heights of condemnation reared themselves between my soul and God, grace overtopped them all, sought me, saved me, and eternally secured me. Not all the corruptions of nature within me, nor all the combinations of hell against me can ever hinder

the matchless, indefectible grace of JEHOVAH removing my sin and supplying my necessity. Ay, and by its sovereign power, by and bye, when divested of the burden of the flesh, I shall shine in the beauty of my Lord, bask in His glory, and be lost in His love. In the words of another, I would say: "*I scarcely know what grace is, but I do see something of what grace does. It is the Bread of life feeding the hungry, the Water of life seeking the thirsty, the Robe of righteousness clothing the naked, the Truth saving the liar, the Rest embracing the weary, the Light illuminating the darkness, the Justifier freeing the condemned; it is liberty for the captive, mercy for the wretched, yea, life for the dead; and all this in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Seeker and the Saviour of His elect.*" Let me ask, Why are we here this evening? It is because grace sought, found, saved, and carried us here, and in the face of all our sin, unbelief, enmity, and indifference brought us to enjoy the company of our God. If you will look at the text, you will see the word "*showed*" is in italics, and when left out the glory of grace appears still more glorious. It is grace not showing itself through the window, or knocking at the door; but lifting the latch and walking in to possess the heart He has so dearly bought. It is the knowledge and experience of this that causes the desiring heart to cry, "O visit me with Thy salvation" (Psalm cvi. 4). "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD; even Thy salvation, according to Thy word" (Psalm cxix. 41). Oftentimes when covenant mercies and the presence of the Lord are enjoyed by those around us, our hearts are sad, our heads are bowed down and we sigh for the presence of Him we love, which is life, peace, joy, and glory. As assuredly as we are partakers of the electing grace of the Father, the redeeming grace of the Son, and the regenerating grace of the Spirit, so we shall experience the restoring and reviving grace of the covenant Three. Our lack of apprehension cannot affect our interest therein. David sinned, but grace saved him. Peter failed, but grace restored him. Paul wavered, but grace confirmed him. We must proceed with our text.

"*To leave us a remnant to escape.*" Blessed be God, it is as true to-day as it was in the days of Paul and Elijah, "even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). God's people in the wilderness are not a multitude at ease; but a remnant escaping. They are like David's ragged regiment in the cave of Adullam. See how they are described in Isaiah xli. 14, "Thou worm, Jacob, ye few men of Israel." To them a precious Jesus says, when hated by the world and harassed by the devil, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

"A little flock amidst a host
Of lions, dogs, and swine,
Distinguished by the Holy Ghost,
And Jesus says, 'They're Mine.'"

"And to give us a nail in His holy place." It is of God's great mercy that we know He has given us His Son as a nail fastened in the sure place of His covenant of grace, from whence it can never be removed. Upon Him is hung all the glory of His Father's house, upon Him I hang for time and for eternity, and neither failure, fracture, nor flaw, can be found in Him. Upon Him JEHOVAH the Father has hung every purpose of mercy for His people and every promise of love to me.

"Salvation to God, who sits on the throne!
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son;
So strong to deliver, so good to redeem
The weakest believer that hangs upon Him."

Look at the marginal rendering of this expression. It is, "*a pin—that is, a constant and sure abode.*" This has reference to the tent-pegs, firmly driven into the ground for firmness and security. If grace has been given to us, we have *a constant and sure abode* in God. "He that dwelleth in the Secret Place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psa. cxi. 1). Ofttimes a feeling sense of danger causes me to cry, "Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; Thou hast given commandment to save me; for Thou art my Rock and my Fortress" (Psa. lxxi. 3). His gracious promise to all His poor outcast people is, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little Sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezek. xi. 16).

"That our God may lighten our eyes." It matters not how much we see, we see and know but little in comparison to what will be revealed to us. Even Paul, with all his knowledge, could say, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12). For the Ephesian saints the apostle prayed, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*: that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. i. 17, 18).

"And give us a little reviving in our bondage." Very many high-flying professors ignore every idea of the living people of God being left to droop in captivity; but God has His own, many of them drooping in spiritual dungeons. The Psalmist cried, "My soul fainteth for Thy salvation; but I hope in Thy Word. Mine eyes fail for Thy Word, saying, When wilt Thou

comfort me " (Psa. cxix. 81, 82). Again he prayed, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name" (Psa. cxlii. 7). None can revive the heart of a captive saint but the Spirit of Him whose heart was broken for His elect and redeemed ones. The voice of the Master, carried upon the wings of the heavenly wind, revives the sorrowful souls of sleeping saints.

May the Lord grant that the few scattered remarks may be owned and blessed to your comfort and edification. Amen.

H Y M N.

GREAT God of wonders ! all Thy ways
Are matchless, God-like, and Divine ;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
Most God-like and unrivalled shine.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee ?
And who hath grace so rich and free ?

Crimes of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty, daring worms to spare,
This is Thy grand prerogative,
And none shall in this honour share.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee ?
And who hath grace so rich and free ?

Angels and men, resign your claim
To pity, mercy, love, and grace ;
These glories crown JEHOVAH'S name
With an incomparable blaze.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee ?
And who hath grace so rich and free ?

In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
We view the covenant of our God ;
Pardon for guilt of deepest dye,
Thro' our most precious Jesu's blood.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee ?
And who hath grace so rich and free ?

DAVIES.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
OCTOBER 21ST, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to Thy holy Name, and glory in Thy praise."—1 Chron. xvi. 35.

THESE words form part of one of David's Psalms of thanksgiving to his God for manifested mercies, and are a precious effusion of his experience by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The whole forms a blessed portion given by God to His people for their guidance, instruction, and encouragement, throughout all time. It reveals JEHOVAH'S magnanimous grace in their election, redemption, and preservation, displays His almighty power in their manifold deliverances, and opens up His marvellous attention to all the necessities of His saints. You will see this by noticing all the ways and works of God for His ancient people as recorded here and throughout Psa. cvi., which is an enlargement upon the same truths. David, in the Psalms, calls upon Israel to thank the Lord for two reasons. First, for what He is in Himself—GOOD. Second, for what He is to them—GRACIOUS. Being overwhelmed with a sense of God's greatness as displayed in His works, he cries: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all His praise?" He then proceeds to pronounce those blessed who keep judgment, and who do righteousness at all times: in times of adversity as well as of prosperity, times of pain as well as of pleasure, times of sorrow as well as of joy. He prays to be remembered with the distinguishing, discriminating favour of JEHOVAH, and to be visited with His salvation. David's enjoyment of God's salvation was not uninterrupted, but was alternated with the realisation of wants and necessities, which caused him to prize very highly the experience of that salvation which is in Christ Jesus with

eternal glory. Here, I would have you notice, God does not bless His people with the visits of His salvation through a deputy. That would never truly satisfy the souls of His living people. He must come Himself, do His own work, and bless them with salvation and deliverance from His own hands. This is sweetly illustrated in the case of Paul and Silas, in the prison at Philippi. When the keeper of the prison said to Paul, "The magistrates have sent to let you go : now therefore depart, and go in peace. Paul said, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison ; and now do they thrust us out privily, nay, verily, but *let them come themselves and fetch us out*" (Acts xvi. 37). If God has wrought in your heart, by the convicting power of His law, a sense of sin and condemnation, and the blessed Spirit has given you to feel your misery and want, nothing will satisfy you short of God Himself. He must come to you, and with His own right hand and His holy arm work for you a gracious deliverance, and all this "that *you* see the good of *His* chosen, rejoice in the gladness of *His* nation, and glory with *His* inheritance." After a confession of sin, iniquity, wickedness, ignorance, forgetfulness, and provocation, the Psalmist acknowledges the covenant grace and power of his God : "Nevertheless, He saved them for His Name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known." Go through the whole of this Psalm, and you will find the record of deliverance after deliverance, salvation after salvation; for God's salvation, experimentally known and felt, is a succession of deliverances, from the first sigh of conviction to the first shout in glory. Satan will assault, the world will perplex, and the flesh will rebel, so that nothing short of a three-fold salvation will suit our desperate case. I do love that "*Nevertheless*." It is JEHOVAH'S break-water, over which the floods of wrath and condemnation can never roll to swallow up the Israel of God. Look at that precious tenth verse : "And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy." Ah, say some of you, that belongs to Israel of old. Well, with a heart made honest by the Holy Ghost, we shall read our own characters in every particular. Read the twelfth and thirteenth verses : "Then believed they His words ; they sang His praise ; they soon forgot His works ; they waited not for His counsel." Look at the margin : "*They made haste, they forgot*." And do not we ? Yes, indeed ! We hasten to forget our God in the multitude of our selfish likes and dislikes. Accursed selfishness oft-times swallows up every gracious thought of Him whose thoughts of love are toward us unceasingly. Take that home with you and ponder over it. In these matters I can sit and write very bitter things against myself, for He knows how greatly I forget Him and the multitude of His mercies, and still further, instead of seeking for His counsel, I am busy seeking counsel from those who know not how to give it,

and when there is no earthly friend near, my heart turns to counsel with itself and meets with bitter disappointment and discontent. How many of us can set to our seal that God is true in this? "And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Again and again we have prayed and petitioned, and begged an interest in the prayers of others—for what? God's glory? No; but for fleshly ease, and rest in some coveted nest in this death-doomed forest. Let us, with a degree of spiritual intelligence, look at our history for the last twelve months, and we shall see a host of blessings bestowed, with leanness of soul, and cleanness of teeth. Salvation from sin, and deliverance from evil, characterised every day's history of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet with mercies so great, they continued their rebelliousness. "They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord." It is very remarkable to see Aaron, with his God-given title, ignored by those who are so fond of using the term "*saint*" with the name of any Bible character. Aaron is the only one who is honoured personally by God the Holy Ghost with the title of "*saint*," yet his name cannot be found in the Romish or Anglican calendars. In speaking of the Old and New Testament worthies, I carefully avoid mentioning them with the prefix, Saint. I do not find a license for it in the inspired Word. But here I would have you still further to notice this record of human incorrigibility and Divine forbearance. Look at the twentieth verse: "They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea. Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them." Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His Word, but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Then you come to a long catalogue of sins and judgments, but, left to themselves, they fully illustrate the truth of dear old Kent's words,—

"When wisdom calls they stop their ear,
And headlong urge their mad career;
Judgments or mercies e'er can sway
Their roving feet to wisdom's way."

Yet!

"Glory to God, they ne'er shall rove
Beyond the limits of His love;
Fenced with JEHOVAH'S *shalls* and *wills*,
Firm as the everlasting hills."

Come with me to verse forty-three, "Many times did He deliver them." Did they thank Him for that? No. "They provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity." According to human judgment He surely must damn them and discard the whole lot. Did He? Never. With marvellous lovingkindness and forbearance He preserves them alive. Look

at that glorious declaration of His patient mercy, "Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry; and He remembered for them His covenant, and repeated according to the multitude of His mercies, He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." O what a lamentable state for the children of God to be pitied by their captors. In such plights as these He puts a cry in their hearts, and the prayer ascends according to the words of our text,—

"Save us, O God of our salvation." None but those who are spiritually bankrupt and feelingly beggared will earnestly and honestly pray such a prayer as this. Salvation is for the experimentally lost, ruined, and helpless. Let me ask you who are brought to possess an experience like this, when sin is a burden, the world is a waste, the devil assaults and tempts, and you are made the makesport of every foolish fancy, is not such a prayer breathed into your heart by the Holy Ghost, and presented before the throne of grace, precious indeed? Salvation! What is it? We hear much of salvation in these days of flaming profession. Senseless enthusiasts can hawk their fanciful salvation at the corner of almost every street. But God's salvation is no mere experiment, no uncertainty hanging upon conditions or contingencies. It is the complete and thorough deliverance of His elect people from all the terrible consequences of Adam's transgression. It is the entire removal of all sin, wrath, condemnation, and fear of hell from eternally loved ones. It is a blessed privilege to believe, and know, and feel that we are safe in the bosom of our God, and that to hell we can never go. The work and reality of salvation lies in the fact that Jesus, as the Responsible One, took our place in judgment and death, where He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted with the rod of inexorable justice, and endured all the suffering due to our sins. Thus God's righteous law was honoured, justice was satisfied, and the Father well pleased. Sin was put away, death was abolished, and a new and living way to glory opened up to all the election of grace. Yet, after the knowledge of all this, sin annoys the conscience, and affects the conduct. All along the weary path of pilgrimage to the gates of glory sin is an annoying and troublesome tenant to the child of God. But with all its annoyance and trouble it is among the all things working together for the good of the called and chosen of God. It is through the weight of its guilt and power we are compelled to embrace a dear Redeemer as our Saviour and our God. If you will look at Nehemiah ix. and Psalm lxxviii. you will see how the Israelites, though redeemed and delivered from Egyptian bondage, had to encounter the warfare of the wilderness and the conflict of the city. Trial after trial, temptation after temptation, sin after sin was their continued experience; but God had made provision for their salvation out of them all. And shall substance be superseded

by the shadow? Never. See 2 Tim. i. 9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Why do I quote these words? Because I believe God will have His children look at the plan, source, and fount of their salvation, which is in His own eternal mind. Paul directs the mind of Timothy to covenant transactions long before the work of the Spirit in His people or the work of Christ for them. Look at that precious expression, "*His own purpose*." Created beings had no hand in JEHOVAH'S purpose of grace and salvation. It is a purpose peculiarly *His own*. "With whom took He counsel?" No one. Nothing short of a covenant salvation, designed by a covenant God, accomplished by the covenant Surety, and witnessed by the covenant Comforter will ever secure to perishing sinners the sweets of Divine acceptance here, and the bliss of eternal glory yonder.

"Ne'er had *we* felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pard'ning love,
Unless *our* worthless name had been
Enrolled to life above."

Salvation is also a fact accomplished. Turn with me to 1 Tim. i. 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners*; of whom I am chief." Mark that word—*sinners*. These are the characters for whom Christ died.

"What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so.
New life from Him we must receive
Before for sin we rightly grieve."

The sinners Christ Jesus came to save are styled, "*His people*" in that precious declaration of the angel to Joseph in Matt. i. 21: "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." I love every word of that gracious reason for giving my Surety the name of Jesus. Look at it.

"FOR"—a gracious reason.
"HE"—a glorious person.
"SHALL"—a glorious certainty.
"SAVE"—a glorious fact.
"HIS"—a glorious possession.
"PEOPLE"—a glorious inheritance.
"FROM"—a glorious distance.
"THEIR"—a terrible possession.
"SINS"—an awful entail.

Blessed be God, Christ came and accomplished all that the Father gave Him to do, and His doing and dying will form the

theme of eternal praise flowing from the ravished hearts of His saved and glorified people.

"Hark ! how the glorious hosts above,
Around the great JEHOVAH'S throne,
Enjoying His eternal love,
The Author of their glory own ;
Without a jarring note they sing,
' SALVATION TO OUR GOD and King.' "

O, my dear friends, look at this glorious theme, this blessed reality ! I would dwell upon it more frequently than I do, and I take shame to myself for my ingratitude and forgetfulness.

"There is a name I love to hear,
I love to speak its worth ;
It sounds like music to my ear,
The sweetest name on earth."

In the enjoyment of its preciousness and power I can say before my God,—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ears ;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fears."

In the name of Jesus I find my salvation, standing, and security. But this appears almost too good to be true for one who feels himself to be fit fuel for eternal fire. In the eternal purpose of JEHOVAH the Father, by the redeeming work of JEHOVAH the Son, and by the almighty power of JEHOVAH the Spirit, we are saved from hell, and from Satan, sin and self. All this is in and by a glorious Person, not in a mere creed, and of His salvation we can say in the words of Hezekiah, "Himself hath done it" (Isa. xxxviii. 15).

"Himself hath done it,"—precious, precious words ;
'Himself,' my Father, Saviour, Brother, Friend ;
Whose faithfulness no variation knows ;
Who, having loved me, loves me to the end."

It is delightful to dwell upon the certain accomplishment of our salvation by Jesus Christ. The angel said, "He *shall*." No experiment in this business. Jesus not only desired the salvation of His people ; but He determined to do it. When He was publicly anointed by the Holy Ghost, and His Father expressed His ineffable delight in Him (Matt. iii. 16, 17), then earth and hell threw every hindrance in His way. His people's sin oppressed Him, Satan's temptations assailed Him, the world hated and derided Him ; but all combined could not frustrate or hinder His work. Salvation was His determination, His delight and His doing. He did not try to do it—HE DID IT. In the rich enjoyment of it the redeemed atheist could say,—

"He glories to save, not the HALF-ruined soul,
But the soul that feels UTTERLY lost ;
The DEAD, not the DYING, He came to make whole,
As Lazarus once lived to boast.

He saves us at first, and he saves us again,
 Each day full a thousand times o'er ;
 The flesh and the devil, the world and its men,
 All ceaselessly call for His power."

Glory be to His Name, our Jesus does nothing by halves. All His thoughts, looks, words, and works here upon earth were for the accomplishment of a salvation which could only be provided in the Father's purpose, performed by His own persistency, and perfected in the souls of His people by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a salvation which places the elect of God in regions inconceivably remote *from* sin, death, and hell. Language fails to describe this graciously provided distance. See Psalm. ciii. 12: "As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Look also at the delightful declaration of Hezekiah in Isa. xxxviii. 17: "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." Think of that if you can. This glorious fact is inconceivable, unutterable. Immensity and infinite space between a forgiven sinner and his sins. Well, *here* we know in part, *up yonder* we shall know even as we are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12). These are cheering truths to the cast down and bowed down pilgrim of Zion (Psa. xlii. 5), for, blessed be God, if there be a casting down there will be a lifting up to elect vessels of mercy (Job. xxii. 29). Some present here this night may be bowed down greatly. Let me ask, What is the cause? Why that look of anxiety, care, and sorrow? Why are thy desires upward, heavenward, Godward? I know. It is because God the Spirit has revealed to thee, by the glorious straightedge of truth, the perversity of thy nature and the crookedness of thy ways. The light of the glory of God has brought to thy view thy blackness, darkness, and ignorance. Thy once called piety is now sheer perversity. Once thou didst pride thyself in thy ability to pass muster amongst thy Christian friends and neighbours, but now thou art not fit to associate with the vilest of the vile. Such is thy estimate of sin in thee as to cause thee to feel that contact with thee must mean defilement. Thy anxious and urgent cry before the throne is, Can there be hope for one so depraved, so vile? Yes, my friend, if God the Holy Ghost has revealed to thee that thy heart is a fountain of impurity, He will show thee still greater things, create faith in thee and bless thee with a good hope through grace of one day entering into His eternal joy. But if we are left to ourselves, we can think, say, or do anything that is bad and abominable, and we are constrained to confess it when brought to face a holy and sin-hating God. Ofttimes at our wit's end, and feeling all creature resources dried up, we find ourselves surrounded and bowed down with helplessness and confusion. Mourning is our lot, and as we ascend the hill of sorrow, Satan roars, Shimei curses, darkness prevails, and none but God can deliver us. I know, to my sorrow, that there

are many professors who are strangers to this perplexing pathway, who appear to be satisfied with God's bounties, yet who know nothing of them spiritually. "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness: whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15). There are those who can speak of a feeling experience with a fluent tongue and thus deceive guileless souls with that which they have borrowed from free-grace magazines or even from the book of Psalms. This reminds me of a deceived and deceiving wretch who read Psalm li. every morning and spent the rest of the day in cheating his customers, or anyone he dealt with. But when the piercing and discovering glare of the bulls-eye of the spiritual detective is directed into the chinks and crannies of the heart, when, by the searching light of God's candle in the conscience, our righteousness is seen in its true colours, and our nature is known and felt to be but enmity against God, where are we? We would be anywhere but in so sad a plight, but we know not how to liberate ourselves. At such times is it not a relief to be able to cry, "Save us, O God of our salvation," and when delivering grace is brought home to the heart by the anointing of the blessed Spirit, we can rejoice with the godly remnant to whom Peter wrote, "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter i. 8, 9).

This salvation is called "God's salvation" in many portions of the Word. Jacob said, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD" (Gen. xlix. 18). Jonah said, "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah ii. 9). Simeon said, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke ii. 30). Do notice the spot from whence Jonah's confession arose. It was not on the dry land in the enjoyment of ease, but from the belly of the fish, which was to him the belly of hell. It is in such spots that God is pleased to make His salvation, in the experience of His people, a glorious reality. The very moment Jonah acknowledged the sovereignty of JEHOVAH in his salvation, the fish vomited him out on the dry land, and thus became a striking type of the fleshly professing Church, for the moment a tried and tempted child of God is taught to acknowledge salvation to be wholly of the Lord, out he must be cast as not fit for their sweet company. It is of God's sovereign mercy we know and feel that salvation is His work from first to last. His in design, execution, and application. That is a precious declaration in Rev. xii. 10: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the

word of their testimony : and they loved not their lives unto the death." Look at those words, "*Now is come salvation.*" It will not satisfy me to say, He came to Bethlehem, Jerusalem, or Calvary. He must come by the power of the Holy Ghost to my poor heart, chasing away accursed unbelief, wretched indifference, and hateful rebelliousness, and giving me to know my place among my Father's children. I must have Himself in experimental possession before I can say honestly in the sight of God, "The LORD is my light and my salvation : whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psa. xxvii. 1).

I do not wish to make myself pre-eminent for vileness before my God, for that would be sheer Phariseism. But if God by His grace makes me feel that I am the chief of sinners it is nothing but spiritual honesty to confess it. The cause of this is a believing view of the glory of Christ. See Isaiah vi. 5, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Here Isaiah saw and felt his uncleanness was like that of those around him, but I must confess that mine appears to surpass all others. You see I am a thorough believer in confession. Not confession to a so-called priest, for that I know is rank presumption and blasphemy. Confession according to the Scriptures must be reciprocal. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James v. 16).

"When saint to saint in days of old,
Their sorrows, sins, and sufferings told,
Jesus, the Friend of sinners dear,
His saints to bless was present there."

It is only from our own personal Spirit-wrought experience that we can truly confess ourselves *the chief of sinners*, and cry unto God in the words of our text, "*Save us, O God of our salvation.*" What a mercy it is for us to know that in the midst of all our infirmities we have a God to go to; that He is our own God in all that he is and all that He has, and that His salvation is ours in all its fitness, freeness, and fulness.

"*Our salvation.*" Turn to Phil. ii. 12, 13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We know what a muddle Arminian perverters of God's Gospel make of this precious passage. They proclaim something which they call salvation free to all mankind, but God proclaims a salvation which is free to all the election of grace. See 2 Tim. ii. 10: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." The salvation Paul names in the passage referred to was in the possession of the people he wrote to.

Mark the words: "*Your own salvation.*" Let me ask, Have you a salvation which the Holy Ghost has made peculiarly your own? If He has, you will want to feel and know it day by day. This is a hidden truth to the mere professor, and spiritual paradox to the real professor. Perfectly saved, and yet being saved day by day. Do you understand this? Yes, every living child of God within these walls knows something of what it is to be saved from the curse and condemnation of God's righteous law, and yet He sighs and groans for salvation from the power and plague of sin within. Lord, we want the experimental possession of Thy salvation in our hearts by the grace and indwelling of Thy blessed Spirit, so that we may daily and hourly bow in sweet acquiescence to Thy mind and will, however painful or perplexing Thy will may be.

"*And gather us together.*" This inspired petition proves that the elect of God in the wilderness are a scattered and peeled people. Dissension, discord, and disruption, are rife on every hand. Seeds of strife and schism are thickly strewn by Satan and his religious brood. Contentions and disputations abound in the professing Church, while the ways of the spiritual Zion do mourn, and spiritual life languishes at a very low ebb. No wonder we should now and then bear the Spirit-inspired desire for JEHOVAH'S gathering power and Jesus' uniting grace. Satan distracts. Jesus attracts. The deceiver drives. The Deliverer draws. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. xlix. 10). It pleases the Father in the riches of His grace to draw from all quarters (Isa. xliii. 5, 6), with great mercies (Isa. liv. 7), the halting, driven out, and afflicted remnant (Micah iv. 6, 7), and the sorrowful to the assembly of His saints (Zeph. iii. 18). It is His design and determination to gather together in one His children that are scattered abroad. I love that word "*together.*" It has no true spiritual meaning apart from Christ. The rich, the proud, and the conceited, know nothing of its power (Job xxvii. 19). The poor, the meek, and the humble are brought to glory in its strength. When Jehovah gathers together who can hinder Him? (Job xi. 10). In His gathering together there is harmony, perfection, oneness. See how beautifully this is expressed throughout the epistle to the Ephesians. In chap. i. 10, we see it is His good pleasure to gather together in one all things in Christ. In chap. ii. 5, 6, we see the gathered ones *quicken together* with Christ, *raised up together* with Christ, and *sitting together* in sweet fellowship with Christ. In the last two verses we see them *fitly framed together* with Christ as a holy temple in the Lord, and *build together* for a habitation of God through the Spirit. O what a marvellous and unspeakable mercy for poor, wretched sinners such as we to find ourselves spiritually gathered together with Christ. With Him in covenant before the worlds were framed, the whole of God's elect by Him were seen.

"In union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free,
The saints from everlasting were,
And shall for ever be.

In cov'nant from of old,
The sons of God they were ;
The feeblest lamb in Jesus' fold
Was blest in Jesus there."

With Him in righteousness, death, resurrection, ascension, and glory. Where He is His loved ones must be, and in association with Him all selfishness departs. Our spiritual affections, which we derive from Him, are fixed upon the Father, whom we delight to worship and glorify.

"How sweet to gather thus in one,
As Christ would have us do,
How sweet to feel we're not our own,
But we're each others too."

Here we are gathered together to serve the Lord (Psalm cii. 20), to enjoy the presence of our God and Saviour (Matt. xviii. 20), to speak to Him on the behalf of our oppressed and suffering brethren (Acts xii. 12), and to speak one to another of what God has graciously done with us, for us, and in us (Acts xiv. 27; Mal. iii. 16). O glorious truth! One with Him in grace here. One with Him in glory throughout eternity.

"Saved in the Lord, for ever saved,
And in life's bundle bound."

"*And deliver us from the heathen.*" Objectors and opposers of God's sovereign election know not the necessity for pleas and petitions like these. They will tauntingly ask, If you are elect and select, why should you ask to be so? But our God works the necessity for prayers like these in the heart's experience of His living people. The Lord Jesus Christ promised Paul that He would deliver him from the people unto whom He would send him (Acts xxvi. 17), yet in writing to the Roman Christians, Paul begged them to strive together with him in their prayers to God for him, that he might be delivered from them that did not believe in Judea (Rom. xv. 30, 31). And also wrote to the Thessalonian Church the urgent request, "Brethren, pray for us, that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men" (2 Thes. iii. 1, 2). The Father has designed that His people shall dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations, or mix among the people of the world (Num. xxiii. 9). The Son prayed on the ground of accomplished redemption that His Father should not take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil in it (John xvii. 15). And the Spirit graciously works their sanctification and separation by endearing their electing Father and their delivering Brother to their hearts. I know it is the painful lot of some of you who are compelled, in the order of God's providence, to face the stern realities of life,

to mourn over the godless competition which stares you in the face daily, and the duplicity meeting you at every turn. For your hands to be kept clean and your consciences clear is a miracle of grace indeed, and as you are brought to look solid facts in the face, your hearts will oftentimes cry out within you, O God, where am I? As you look at the aboundings of fleshly free-will impudence and arrogance, and the display of evangelical hypocrisy, you will sigh more and more for deliverance from it all, that you may give thanks unto God's holy Name, and glory in His praise.

Thanksgiving to God's holy Name is the joy, delight, and willing service of His saved, gathered, and delivered people. Having introduction by Christ Jesus into the temple and presence of JEHOVAH, with His light in their understanding, and His love shed abroad in their hearts, they render unto Him hearty thanksgivings for salvation from sin and separation from sinners.

In His name, JEHOVAH-JIREH, they are privileged to read a supply for all their temporal and spiritual wants.

In His name, JEHOVAH-ROPHI, they discover a cure for all their temporal and spiritual diseases.

In His name, JEHOVAH-NISSI, they find defence and victory in all times of spiritual warfare.

In His name, JEHOVAH-SHALOM, they are blessed with peace, though enemies abound.

In His name, JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, they glory in an ever-present, succouring, and sympathising friend.

In His name, JEHOVAH-JESUS, they possess all they need for time and for eternity.

Well, then, may we glory in Him who is the praise of all His saints, and who commands the praise of our hearts through time, and will draw it forth in floods of rejoicing when His covenant glory shall be seen without a veil between.

" Oh! when shall we among them stand,

In Jesus' righteousness complete,

Obtain our place at His right hand,

And cast our crowns before His feet?

We'll join the heavenly chorus then,

' SALVATION TO OUR GOD.' Amen."

And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost be all due praise and true thanksgiving rendered for ever and ever. Amen.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“HARD THINGS.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON SUNDAY EVENING,
FEBRUARY 17TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“Thou hast showed Thy people hard things; Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.”—Psalm lx. 3.

DIVINE sovereignty is ever hateful to the carnal mind. JEHOVAH'S right to do as He will with His creatures is fiercely contested by fiends and fools, yet in the face of all opposition “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan iv. 35). “With Him is strength and wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are His. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, He maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man” (Job xii. 16—25). All things in heaven, earth, and hell serve Him, and are but the outcome of His infinite wisdom, matchless skill, and pre-arrangements for a covenant people. With Him, in the accomplishment of His purposes of love, there can be no mishap or misadventure, and in the knowledge of this we can sing with spiritual intelligence and adoring gratitude,—

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"No cross nor bliss, no loss nor gain,
 No health or sickness, ease, or pain,
 Can give themselves a birth ;
 The Lord so rules by His command,
 No good nor ill can stir a hand,
 Unless He send them forth."

As a loving Father He has purposed, prepared, and promised all spiritual good for His people in covenant. As a faithful Saviour, Jesus preserves, performs, and perfects all things for us, while the blessed Spirit sweetly witnesses with our spirit that all these are perfected in us, and we are perfect in them. It is our privilege to know that JEHOVAH is the Performer of all things for and in His people. All things—whether for weal or for woe, for joy or sorrow, for pain or pleasure. The Apostle Paul knew and enjoyed this when he declared, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 36). It is for the want of understanding these glorious truths that many, who are sound at heart before God, stand amazed at the declaration of His sovereignty. Lucid expositions of Divine truth are considered by them to be too strong, rather dangerous, not judicious. But, let men and devils say or suggest what they may, "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. xxx. 5). God, in His written Word, says what He means, and means what He says, though in our ignorance we fail to apprehend His mind, and, for a time, are misled with wrong views of truth.

It is a blessed thing for us to know that all is appointed for us in infinite wisdom; but how the holiness and purity of God in the heart of a regenerate sinner can remain unsullied is a puzzle and a paradox. Well, my dear friends, if God's Word contained no puzzles or paradoxes to finite minds, we might conclude that it was human and not Divine, and that God could not be its Author. But He has been pleased to show Himself to be God in His records of spiritual experience, and has enabled us to read His mind and will in the pains and perplexities of those gone before us to glory. Like Manoah and his wife, we stand and look on while He does wondrously (Judges xiii. 19). We hear and understand things which are unutterable (2 Cor. xii. 4), and it would be presumption to attempt to explain the heavenly realities which He carries home to our hearts. He acts as He will. In truth, He ever did so. Before the day-star knew its place He could not go out of Himself for a reason why He should act in grace toward His own. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" (Isaiah xl. 14). "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job xxiii. 13). We see in the words of our text, and indeed throughout the whole Psalm, Divine sovereignty revealed in the trials and

tribulations of God's ancient people. It is not my intention to direct your minds to the historical, but to a few spiritual facts wrought in our heart's experience during our pilgrim journey in a world of sin and suffering. The Psalm commences with complaints and desires. "O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast scattered us, Thou hast been displeased; O turn Thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; Thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh." Then come the words of the text,—

"Thou hast showed Thy people hard things; Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment."

The first point we will notice is the vast difference existing between the exercises of a child of God and those of a child of the devil; between a sinner under the power of Divine grace, and one left wholly to himself; between an elect vessel of mercy, who is guided by the gracious will of his heavenly Father, and a reprobate who is tossed about by his own fleshly caprice. Let disappointments, crosses, trials, and tribulations come to those who never discern a loving Father's hand, and a profusion of fleshly "ifs" are sure to crop up. "If" so and so had happened matters would have been different! Ah, my dear friends, our God deals not in "ifs," only as evidential, to point out the position or condition of His pilgrim-people in this wilderness world, and of their standing before Him. It is the folly of the carnal mind ever to stop short of

"The Great First Cause of all events,"

and to be occupied with everchanging circumstances and influences, instead of looking to Him by whom all things exist and occur. The Psalmist traced all his *hard things* up to his God. He does not say, "If I had been guided differently," or, "If I had not been influenced by evil counsel I should have been at ease. Oh, no! The Psalmist knew full well that if the advice of a friend which leads to sorrow is part of the purpose of JEHOVAH, His child must receive that advice. It is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to know that all circumstances and influences which have surrounded me from the moment that I, an insignificant speck of humanity, first made my appearance in this sinful world until now, have been according to JEHOVAH'S sovereign purpose. If it were not for the gracious will of my covenant God I should not be here to-night. It is of His rich mercy that we are kept near to Him in the face of all our wanderings, fears, and falls. Though hateful unbelief, and accursed indifference hold us in their grip for long seasons together, yet He rests in His love. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" (Job xxiii. 13). Nothing can turn Him from His work of love in the hearts of His people. He has a desire to the work of His hands, and will perfect that which concerns every member of the election of grace (Job xiv. 15; Psa.

cxviii. 8). Sometimes He brings them into His banqueting house to feast upon the fulness of His covenant love. You see this is His doing. The bride could say, "He brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (Song ii. 4). Love everlasting! Love unchanging! In the enjoyment of which we can sing with bounding hearts,—

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine:
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

Am I basking in the sunshine of His presence, and is my heart throbbing with the joy of His salvation? "HIMSELF hath done it." Is my heart bowed down with sadness, and are my sorrows enlarged because of the absence of my best Friend? "HIMSELF hath done it." The Psalmist, in the words of my text, is speaking of the darkness, dissatisfaction, and discontent which met his view on every hand, yet ascribes it all to the hand of that God who is! "too wise to err and too good to be unkind." He says, "Thou hast showed Thy people hard things." Can you believe it? I can. Yes, I fully believe that astounding declaration by Solomon, "The LORD hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. xvi. 4). Is not that marvellous? Evil days, evil influences, and evil men cannot exist but by the will and good pleasure of a sovereign God. It was an evil day when wicked Shimei cursed righteous David, yet David could say to those who would have taken off Shimei's head, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12). It was an evil day when wicked Judas betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss; yet he was appointed to that dreadful business. See how the Apostle Peter states this terrible truth: "a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: *whereunto also they were appointed*" (1 Peter ii. 8). These awful creatures are described in Jude 4, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, *who were before of old ordained to this condemnation*; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." The truly taught child of God rejects not such creature-humbling and God-exalting truths as these, but rejoices in the fact that by the Holy Ghost they are the means of bringing him lowly before His feet, who alone can counsel, guide, and teach him in heavenly mysteries. This was declared in the sublime language of Nebuchadnezzar when he was hurled from his high state of pomp and power to the level

of the beasts: "And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me: and I blessed the Most High: and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Daniel iv. 34, 35). That is the testimony of a man well qualified to speak on these sublime truths, having been humbled by Divine power and exalted by sovereign grace. In the midst of abounding evils Amos cried, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (chap. iii. 6).

"*Hard things.*" It is the Lord who shows these unto His people. The hiding of His mind and purposes is oftentimes hard and perplexing, yet in this our blessed Master rejoiced and gave thanks. See Luke x. 21, 22: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me of My Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." In the hand of JEHOVAH is the hiding of His power (Hab. iii. 4). "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. xxv. 2). Is the mind of our God hidden behind the dark cloud of His perplexing providence? "HIMSELF hath done it." Let us look at a few Scriptural illustrations. Come to the commencement of the book of Job. There we see the lightning flying from JEHOVAH'S treasures, and the winds from His fists, working death and desolation in the midst of Job's possessions. Not a hurricane or tempest can do its devastating work in this world of sin but by the opening of the fists of Omnipotence. He holds the waters of affliction and sorrow in the hollow of His hand, in the very spot where He holds the saints secure; and, blessed be His Name, the waters shall assuage, but His saints shall abide securely in His hands. Loss after loss attended dear old Job. In mind, body, and estate he was afflicted; but in all this Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly, yet he ascribed all to the hand of his God, saying, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD." Poor human nature always occupies itself with second causes, and in this instance would have seen the Sabeans and Chaldeans, the lightning and the wind; but Job saw God in all, and was privileged to acknowledge His sovereign right to do as He will with His own in judgment or in mercy. I have heard of a minister of Christ,

who, upon hearing of a grievous affliction borne by a friend, said to him, "Thank God for this marked manifestation of His covenant concern and care over you." This was quite right.

" 'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross;
But the Saviour's power to know
Sanctifying every loss;
Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscrib'd upon them all,
This is happiness to me."

It is a marvellous mercy to know that all things, whether they be painful or pleasant, work together in the hands of God for the good of all those who are blessed with an interest in His love, and are the called according to His purpose.

"*Hard things.*" As the recipients of God's grace we are not long in discovering a large amount of the flesh in everything we do. Our likes and dislikes often run counter to His gracious pleasure wrought in us. If He is pleased to give us our hearts' desire, He is almost sure to send leanness into our souls (Psa. cvi. 15). He indulges His children with many pleasures which increase their earthly happiness, but in the enjoyment of them spiritual joys decrease. Those of us who are brought by the kind hand of God through floods and through flames alone can understand these paradoxes. We love to spend our time cosily and comfortably, and would tread the way to glory in satin slippers, but these are not the things for rough roads and thorny paths. We would rise to the third heaven of spiritual joy, but we find ourselves bemoaning the thorn in the flesh and the buffetings of the messenger of Satan. Ay, and I can tell you that Zion's pilgrim is sometimes beset and buffeted by a legion of Satan's messengers. Defamation of character is never pleasant to the tried disciple of Christ, and when lacking the patience and gentleness of the Master he will cry out, "People ought not to make these defamatory reports." Wait a moment, my pilgrim brother: Dost thou not remember One in whose life no defect appeared, in whose mouth no guile was found, yet He endured the pangs of painful defamation? Men called thy God and Saviour, blasphemer, devil, and I know not what. The day may be not far distant when you and I may be accounted mad, and the very scum and offscouring of the earth, and we shall know it in the experience of fellowship with a precious Christ in His sufferings. In David we see a striking type of Christ. He was a man of sorrows. In early days he was persecuted by Saul. In after years he suffered at the hands of his own children. By the rebellion of Absalom he was driven from his throne and his home, and, though the beloved of God, he was cursed by Shimei. Abishai yearned to settle matters with Shimei, but David, like his antitype, beheld the hand of his God in all things, saying, "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." This is strange

language in the ears of *pious* free-willers, but encouraging and establishing to those who are taught and brought to bow to the will of a sovereign God. Has Job a loss? He says, The Lord hath given it. Had David a cross? He says, The Lord hath bidden. JEHOVAH is sovereign Lord over all men, things, events, circumstances, and influences. There is not an angel-elect can descend to minister to a tried and tempted saint down here, independently of His command. There is not a fiend can wing its flight from hell's dark regions, spreading desolation and death upon this sin-blighted earth, but at His bidding. The Psalmist knew this, and in contrasting his God with those of the heathen, said, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psa. cxv. 3). Again, in Psalm cxxxv. 6, he says, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, and in the seas, and in all deep places." We cannot help but praise and adore the sovereign goodness of our covenant God for bringing us to see and know that every spoke in the wheel of His providence is according to His consummate skill and infinite wisdom. Is it not almost too wonderful to think that this God is ours, and yet, somehow or other, we dare not say He is not. Sometimes, when raised to a little hope, we can sing,—

"This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as great as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him——"

Will we? Well, we will ask Him for grace to enable us to—

"——trust Him for all that's to come."

The great and glorious JEHOVAH, in His Trinity of persons, and in the unity of His underived essence, is our God. JEHOVAH the Father in His covenant purpose; JEHOVAH the Son in His loving performances; JEHOVAH the Spirit in His gracious power; JEHOVAH the Father *for* us electing; JEHOVAH the Son *with* us redeeming; JEHOVAH the Spirit *in* us witnessing.

"And Thou eternal Spirit vast—
What love can Thine transcend?
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,
Indwelling God and Friend."

The thought is stupendous! Almost beyond our imagination. The pure, and holy, and blessed Spirit, condescending to make these bodies of death and humiliation His abode. Is it not marvellous? He searches the deep things of God in the hearts of His people. "Thou hast shewed Thy people hard things." Here we are brought to close quarters with a heart-searching God. Notice these two words:—

"Thy people." This is proof positive that JEHOVAH has a people very near and dear to Him. How near? When blessed with access into His sacred presence, each of them can sing,—

"So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son,
I am as near as He."

Nearer than that it is impossible to be. This precious truth we find in the words of our adorable Lord to His Father, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One" (John xvii. 23). Look!

A people elected (Deut. vii. 6). "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

A people redeemed (Luke i. 68). "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people."

A people regenerate (Psa. cx. 3). "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."

"Eternal, free, electing, grace,
Redemption's bound'ry sets;
And those whom Jesus died to save,
The Spirit ne'er forgets."

Isaiah speaks of beasts, dragons, and owls, whom the Lord styles "My people," and says of them, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise" (Isa. xliii. 19—21). These brought into spiritual life, quickened together with Christ, and experiencing, suffering oneness with Him, are ofttimes puzzled and perplexed with the hard things revealed in their pathway. But the fashionable religion of the day consists in fancied smooth things, and, as in Ezekiel's day, sowing soft pillows under arm-holes; and, in the face of an open Bible, almost every mouth is opened against a covenant God, His precious truth, and His poor and afflicted people.

"Hard things." One of the first hard things which JEHOVAH shows to His people is sin. When this is revealed in the light of His glory it appears a hard, heavy, and hateful thing. Here is an anomaly: The Lord is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13); yet it is His to show to elect vessels of mercy their transgressions, sins, and iniquities. This is sure to call forth something like the confession we find in Ezra ix. 6: "O, my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Turn with me to Psa. xxxviii. 1—4, where the Psalmist, under a sense of his sin and wretchedness, cries out, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath; neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. For Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore." Like an angry creditor demanding that

which a bankrupt debtor cannot give. The debt must be paid, or to the prison-house of hell I must go. "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." God having bestowed upon me a new nature to which sin is hateful and abhorred, I endeavour, with all the power of that nature, to depart from iniquity; yet, strange to say, the more I seek to escape from its power, the more I feel its hateful grasp; and the persistency of my old nature to enjoy it. Here I understand something of the inward conflict described by Joseph Irons,—

"What means this conflict in my heart?
In which both grace and sin take part:
Both seem resolved in me to reign,
And thus a daily war maintain.
Grace gives me drops of heavenly joys,
But sin my happiness annoys;
Sin is resolved to hold me fast,
But grace shall conquer sin at last."

Another hard thing shown to me by JEHOVAH the Spirit, is this stoney, stubborn heart of mine. Is it not astonishing how we can hear and read of a heavenly Father's love, of "*the unknown sufferings*," agony, and bloody sweat of a dear Redeemer in Gethsemane and Golgotha, and yet remain unmoved? I remember listening to the declaration of truths most precious and glorious with a heart as unconcerned as a stone. Yet I heard, and what I heard proved to be God's snow coming down from heaven to melt in after days. Frequently I go about mourning my deadness, and feeling that nothing can exist in this wretched bosom but a host of devils, seeking my destruction. I look for love, but find envy and enmity. I long to be melted under the warm inshinings of covenant love and affection, but am frozen under the chilling influence of sinful selfishness which surrounds me. This is hard and hateful to me, and causes me to despise myself because of the discoveries God has given me of His fatherly pity, to one so vile and base. Here I can sigh,—

"True, I am a foolish creature,
And I've sinned against His grace!
But forgiveness is His nature,
Though He justly hides His face.
Ere He called me well He knew
What a heart like mine would do."

"*Hard things.*" God's sovereign right to do as He will with the creatures of His hand is a very *hard thing* for many in experimental oneness with Himself to understand. Some are so perplexed with it as almost to wish it wrapt up and kept out of hearing. Yet He will have His sovereign rights proclaimed, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Before all worlds He pitched upon whom He would to save in Christ with

an everlasting salvation. He appointed all instruments and means, both supernal and infernal, to accomplish His sovereign will in the case of both the elect and reprobate. But how many believe this? The vast majority of professing Christians find sweeter morsels to roll under their fleshy-religious tongues in *nice religious* novels and trumpery free-will magazines. This is shocking to declare, yet it is painfully true. But who maketh me to differ? I remember well the raging enmity of my heart against dear Edward Walker, previous to his appointment to the rectory of Cheltenham. After the dear Lord had graciously slain my enmity, and brought me to acknowledge His right to do as He will with His own, I sought the company of the dear man, and confessed my sin and folly. He smiled and said, "Before I formed thee in the belly; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). The words of the Lord from this godly clergyman sounded like music in my ears, and have not lost their sweetness to this day. Sovereign love will have its own, when the manifestation of eternal choice runs counter to humanitarian views of propriety. A supplanting Jacob is loved and caressed, while Esau is hated and rejected. After the loved one is called, caressed, and comforted, after he has enjoyed the life, light and love of his God, after he has experienced deliverance out of the hands of his enemies, he will be brought into straits again, and from the bitterness of his soul will cry, "Lord, make Thy way plain before my face." Perplexed, distracted, and overwhelmed with the disappointments and failures attending us, we have sought for sympathy with the saints, and succour from Him; but we have met with sorrow and sadness.

"*Hard things.*" We have nourished and brought up children; lavished our love upon them, and expected to find in them the solace of our declining days, and the delight of our fading eyes; but we have learned that we may make chalk lines for our children to walk in, while they will see us far enough before they will attend to our directions. By lesson after lesson our gracious God teaches us that out of, and apart from, Christ, disappointment, deceit and dissatisfaction abound. Yet with all this we strive again and again to feather our nest, smooth our pathway, and laugh at pain; but, in a moment we are pulled up—we sigh—we groan, we shout—"Thou hast showed Thy people hard things." Many of God's poor children carry about with them tabernacles weak and frail. They sigh, "*There is something in the wind,*" especially if it comes from the East. Sounds sad and ominous seem to indicate that they must pack up and be off. But are we prepared? "Aye, there's the rub." The thought of death under such apprehensions is hard indeed. See Heb. ii. 14, 15: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of

the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Death, to the mind of a child of God, who realizes not his interest in the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, is indeed a *hard thing*. Ah! but blessed be His holy Name, if He has showed us hard things He will also soften and sweeten our rugged pathway with revelations of His love.

"Thou hast made us to drink of the wine of astonishment." Many times God's afflicted ones are drunk with wine, but wine not of man's preparing. God's ancient Church knew something of this when He said to her, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine; Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again." The highly spiced wine of the Lord's indignation was taken from His hand at Calvary and drunk to the dregs by the suffering Surety of the elect of God. A taste of it caused Him to cry out in bitter amazement, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). It is a marvellous mercy that we know our precious Surety's sufferings sweeten every sorrow. It is this which causes us to turn from the bitters to the sweets, and to drink deep draughts of the wine of the everlasting covenant, brought from the deep wine cellar of everlasting love. This is the wine that cheereth God and man (Judges ix. 13). When we get a sip of this wine and our hearts are comforted with His love, we bless and praise His holy name that He ever gave us to understand that marvellous mystery of grace expressed in those precious words,—

"The foolish, the fearful, the weak are My care,
The helpless, the hopeless, I hear their sad prayer;
From all their afflictions My glory shall spring—
The deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing."

The hotter the furnace, the brighter the opportunity to show forth His praise. His gracious deliverances shall beget to Himself an eternal revenue of praise when we arrive by His grace in the home He has provided for us up yonder, beyond gunshot of the devil, and far from the plague of sin.

Whilst we are here we must sip of the cup of trembling; but when we get yonder we shall drink deep draughts of the cup of bliss. Here we shall daily learn that our due desert is hell's darkest depths; but brought by our heavenly Bridegroom into the banqueting-house of covenant love, we are blessed

with the assurance that to the depths of perdition we can never descend. Here I am sometimes privileged to say to my gracious Lord and Sovereign, "Precious Saviour, Thou hast loved Thine own which are in the world, and Thou hast given me to hope, and feel, and believe that I am one of them; tell me, wilt Thou love me to the end of all my doubts, and fears, and sins, and sorrows?" Oh, how blessed it is to look up with childlike confidence, and on new-covenant ground, say, Lord, I am Thine, and, notwithstanding all my failures, falls, and follies, Thou must love me right home to the house and heart of Thy God and Father, and mine.

Gracious Father, bless Thy tried ones here, for our dear Redeemer's sake. Amen.

H Y M N.

ASTONISHED at myself, I stood
Unclean before the Lord;
Yet Jesus washed me in His blood,
And health of soul restored.

Astonished at His sovereign grace,
I cried, "O Lord, why me?"
He said, "Tho' you are vile and base,
My love is rich and free."

Astonished at His rich repast,
I sang of sins forgiven,
And thought the joy would always last,
Till earth was changed for heaven.

Alas, how soon, by Satan moved,
In darkest paths I trod;
Yet with astonishment I proved:
I changed, and not my God.

And still, though black, deserving hell,
On Christ for help I call;
And O, astonishing to tell,
His merit covers all.

If with astonishment I see
So much of God below,
What must the full fruition be
Where pleasures ever flow!

DENHAM.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

GRACE, GODLINESS, GLORY.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE HORNS ASSEMBLY ROOMS, KENNINGTON, ON
SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1878, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ;

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."—Titus ii. 11—13.

WE have a very precious and profitable theme before us to-night. It is the revelation of JEHOVAH'S grace in the power of the Gospel. We, who have been taught by the Spirit, have no Gospel without the revelation of JEHOVAH in His Trinity of Persons. JEHOVAH the Father planning salvation for His people. JEHOVAH the Son performing it *with* His people. JEHOVAH the Spirit perfecting it *in* the heart's experience of all interested therein. This is the threefold cord which can never be broken. The Scripture can never be broken (John x. 35). The Word of God is not bound (2 Tim. ii. 9). The world, particularly the religious world, has burned the bodies of God's messengers of grace, and proud professors do bind many of the ministers of Christ with the cords of their lordly, legal, and professedly loving influence; but they cannot burn or bind the living truth of God; Papists may burn the Book, but they cannot destroy its spirit. It is of God's mercy we know there is no breaking the threefold cord of covenant union : God the Father *for* His people, God the Son *with* His people, and God the Holy Ghost *in* His people.

God's Gospel is like Himself—a Trinity. It is

Doctrinal in the book.

Experimental in the heart.

Practical in the life.

I am conscious that in such a declaration as this I may wound the spirit of many a tried and tempted child of God who may be anxiously concerned as to its standing before Him.

I desire not to do this. I pray God to bring me down, testimonially, to the deepest depths of spiritual necessity experienced by His people, and to the highest heights to which He lifts them by His grace. Sometimes I am brought so low in apprehension and feeling as to question whether I have any part or lot in the matter of His grace. If He had aught to do with me, why should I be so cold, so listless, so indifferent? Why should I read of His wondrous grace, and of the unknown sufferings of the God-Man for His people, and the amazing condescension of the blessed Spirit in making our hearts His dwelling-place. I look around me when all the Father's children appear to feel the sweets of His love in their hearts, but I am left to sigh,—

“The rocks can rend ; the earth can quake ;
The seas can roar ; the mountains shake ;
Of feeling all things show some sign,
But this unfeeling heart of mine.”

Here I find myself spiritually one with the flock of slaughter, with JEHOVAH'S scattered and peeled people—a people heavily in debt, deeply distressed, and greatly discontented, having no hope in themselves, but trusting wholly to the wisdom and love of their glorious Captain. After grace has wrought its mighty achievements in the soul, failures and falls will attend the child of God ; but it is our mercy to know that even in these spots, JEHOVAH beholds the work of His own hands, has a desire to it, and will perfect in eternal glory that which He has begun in purest grace.

But it is ours to notice that God's Gospel is like Himself—a trinity.

1. Doctrine, revealing the will of the Father.
2. Experience, unfolding the work of the Son.
3. Practice, displaying the way of the Spirit.

Find me a man all doctrine, so-called, and there you have a cold, carping Calvinist. Look at a man all experience, and there you have a mere enthusiast. Produce a man whose religion is all practice, and you are distressed with the sight of a full-blown Pharisee. I have known such characters as these. Some years ago I was haunted by a hard-headed, cold-hearted Calvinist. He could babble election, prate predestination, and delighted to thrash Arminians in argument. He was acquainted with the doctrines of grace as set forth in the written Word. He could mention almost every free-grace champion from the apostles' days. For a time he haunted me, until discriminating, experimental truth scared him away. At length he died, but death was a terror to him, while the person and work of Jesus provided not rest for his restless and rebellious spirit. From this case I saw, and knew, and felt that

“True religion's more than notion,
Something must be known and felt.”

Vital godliness is something vastly more important to picking and culling Calvinistic flowers from the fair fields of Divine revelation. Such may form a very pretty bouquet, but death is in the whole. We desire something more than this, even the communication of God's truth to our hearts by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. This will make God's Gospel a living reality to my heart, and when hope may appear to give way, and my evidences are growing dim, Christ will be my All-in-all.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesu's blood and righteousness ;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesu's Name :
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

In the enjoyment of a Divinely-wrought experience, there is a danger of under-rating plain statements of doctrine. I have heard people say, "*I care nothing at all about doctrine.*" Well, my dear friends, I do. I love the doctrines as they are recorded in God's written Word ; and here I would ask, Would you like to give up your Bibles? Would you part with the written revelation of God's mind and will? You answer at once, No! Then you do care for good, sound, wholesome doctrine; but this in itself will not satisfy you. You want this which Paul speaks of in Gal. i. 15 : "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son *in* me." A revelation *to* will never satisfy a living soul. It must be Christ *in* me. See! Christ in me, my Confidence, therefore I have faith. Christ in me, my Hope, therefore I have hope. Christ in me, my Life, therefore I live. I have nothing, yet Christ is my All-in-all. As I am brought to know myself in the light of that gracious experience which flows from the revelation of JEHOVAH in His covenant purposes and promises to His covenant people, I delight in those precious words of Peter, "Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Mark! What is the end of the faith of God's elect? Ask an Arminian what is the end of his faith, and I am sure he cannot tell you whether it will be salvation or damnation. A quaint character was once asked did he think a notorious Arminian would be saved. To which he answered, "I cannot tell ; but it all depends upon the day of his death." "How is that?" asked the inquirer. "Because he believes a man may be one day in a state of grace and another day out of it. So, according to his creed, if he dies upon a day when he is in grace, he must go to heaven. If he dies when he is out of it, he must go to hell." That is sound reasoning. But, from a gracious experience, a gracious practice will manifest itself. I know that free-willers and free-workers

will be ready to taunt us with a lack of service in this respect. They tell us we are not doing all we might for the good of society. These know not what they are talking about. Our God will come down in great wrath and burn up every society but that in eternal union with Himself. I bless and praise His holy Name because He has been pleased to separate me to His Gospel and to Gospel society. He has linked my life with His, and bound my spirit with that of His people, so that I can say with the woman of Shunem, with all godly sincerity, "I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings iv. 13). And I love to dwell there.

" My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains ;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns."

Thus led, I rejoice to know that "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. xxx. 5). Not certain portions that we prefer, though there are portions which have been made life, power, sweetness and savour to our souls, over which we love to linger. There is that blessed thirty-first of Jeremiah, and it is a blessed one to me. There is that glorious sixtieth of Isaiah, and that precious fifty-third. In the tenth and seventeenth chapters of John I oftentimes roam in quest of that spiritual marrow and fatness which a gracious Father does not deny me. But every part of the blessed Book is pure and profitable. To the carnal mind many parts appear impure, but this is only in accordance with Paul's statement in Titus i. 15: "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." As I read any of those portions which faithfully declare the failures and falls of the saints, and over which voluptuous wretches gloat with fleshly satisfaction, I read with dissatisfaction my own weakness and sin, but with satisfaction the grace and forbearance of my God to me. I come across certain portions of God's blessed Book obnoxious to our natural understanding; but as we are brought into subjection to the teaching of the blessed Spirit we own His Word to be right, confess our ignorance, and cry before the throne, "What I know not teach Thou me."

Before proceeding to dwell upon the text, let us look at the context. In it we shall see some very practical truths. Some may consider them to be too practical, yet it is the business of a faithful minister of our Lord Jesus Christ to deal out God's truth as He gives it, and not as people would have it. Now, look, God's revelation of grace, godliness, and glory, is given in connection with our everyday concerns, and as an incentive to diligence, faithfulness, chastity, and honesty. Look at the ninth verse, "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again." A high and dry Calvinist would say, *A pity that Paul had not something*

better to write about. Now suppose I were to preach a sermon to servants, exhorting them to obey their masters and mistresses I should not proceed far before many who are servants would wish me to cease. Nevertheless, Paul's preaching had to do with every relationship in life. In the verse quoted he exhorts servants to obedience and meekness. I know some may be ready to ask me, Are you able to do that which you demand from us? To this I answer, My inability alters not the Divine demand. Look further, "Not purloining." What does that mean? Not pilfering. The slaves of Greece and Rome were fearfully guilty of this sin. But purloining is something more than appropriating the property of another. A servant has no right to deal extravagantly with an employer's property; but, in the fear of God, to act in the employer's absence as in his presence, and remember that during the time legally due to him the servant should render to him the work due. It may be said, the principles of common rectitude ought to be sufficient to teach a person to live honestly. Ah, my dear friends, the fleshly rules of propriety and rectitude are not to be trusted by a living child of God who knows something of the power of sin and his own weakness. Such fleshly props are sure to fall. "But showing all fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Divine incentives to honesty, fidelity, and consistency, are presented in our text. Look at them.

I. GRACE.—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation."

II. GODLINESS.—"Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

III. GLORY.—"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

I. GRACE.—What is it? It is free, spontaneous favour to the undeserving. When we know, feel, and enjoy it, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth, we find it to be unmerited, unbought, uninfluenced, favour. It is the expression and communication of JEHOVAH'S covenant love to me for nothing, not only when I did not deserve it, but when I was determined not to have it. I was born an enemy to Him, lived at enmity with Him, and my carnal mind at enmity against Him, yet He loved me, chose me, saved me, and taught me to love Him some little in return.

"Determined to save, He watched o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

I was determined to be damned; but my God would not allow me to have my own way, because He was determined to save me. His determination must be manifested to the objects thereof in that salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Tim. ii. 10).

"Grace is JEHOVAH'S sovereign will,
In an eternal covenant sure;
Which for His seed He will fulfil,
Longer than sun and moon endure."

We will look at the revelation of this grace in the following order:—

1. *Election.* "Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace: otherwise, work is no more work" (Rom. xi. 5, 6). Do you want anything plainer than that? If you do, I cannot give it to you. For many years God has blessed me with the settled conviction that in the salvation of elect sinners, grace and human works are antagonistic. JEHOVAH'S revelation of Himself as a loving Father to His children is all of grace. The covenant made before all worlds was all in grace. The foundation of the spiritual temple of God was laid in grace; its erection is all by His gracious hand, and the headstone will be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. iv. 7). In the portion I have directed you to, we see the apostle proving the sovereignty of grace in the case of Elijah. The prophet was left alone, and mourned because none were found in the ways of God but himself. But God answered him thus, "I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Reservation is God's act. He keeps and preserves a remnant in the world, according to the election of grace. This is as true to-day as when the apostle wrote it. As we look abroad upon the face of society, and survey and search through professing Christendom, where shall we find the living members of our Lord's body? If you travel by land or sea, by rail or road, or if you visit every house in the street you reside in, you will find the number of God's elect to be very few. Broken-hearted sinners, in spiritual oneness with a once broken-hearted Christ, are very scarce. Yet there is a remnant. What is a remnant? That which is left after separation, removal, or rejection. In trade it is that part which is left, and which cannot command a market price. So God's elect are esteemed by the world as under value—the scum and offscouring of all things. Well, we are quite willing to be that for God's sake, Christ's sake, and the truth's sake. But here we ask, What is election? It is picking, choosing, taking some, and leaving others.

"May not the sovereign Lord on high
Dispense His favours as He will?
Choose some to life while others die,
And yet be just and gracious still?"

Fashionable religion declares this to be awful doctrine; while God-wrought faith hails it as glorious truth. In election, God exercised His sovereign right to save whom He would. In

regeneration, He displays it in bringing to Himself characters most vile, worthless, and disreputable—a blood-thirsty Manasseh, a persecuting Saul of Tarsus, a devil-possessed Magdalene, a blaspheming thief, In Mary Magdalene we see electing grace triumphant. Seven devils were cast out of her. Seven, denoting perfection, speaks her a walking hell, yet a dear Redeemer loved her as an object of His Father's eternal choice. In the counsels of eternity the Father chose to Himself a definite number of the human family to be redeemed by His Son, regenerated by His Spirit, and brought by His grace to the heights of His glory. In the enjoyment of this great and glorious fact, my heart bows before Him in awe and adoration, and my spirit sings,—

“Eternal election preserves me secure ;
I live by that sovereign decree ;
Redeemed by my Saviour, and called by His power,
I worship the Covenant Three.”

This brings us to notice :—

2. *Redemption.* See Eph. i. 7 : “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The riches of JEHOVAH'S grace treasured in Christ Jesus, secures the eternal redemption of all the elect. The necessity for the glorious work of redemption is demonstrated to me, and in me, by the revelation of the awful fact that naturally I am Satan's blind and willing slave, and the cords and chains of my sins bind me to earth, and would drag me to hell. But the blessed Redeemer comes again and again, and by His Spirit reveals to me the glorious fact that He took my place of condemnation and death, and on Calvary's tree paid the price of my redemption by shedding His most precious blood, and yielding up to law and justice His invaluable life. Turn with me to Gal. iii. 13 : “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us : for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Or, according to Deut. xxi. 23 : “For he that is hanged is accursed of God.” (Marginal rendering, “The curse of God.”) O my soul, think of that ! Jesus in marvellous grace endured all the curse of God for thee, and thou art blessed in Him. He came down to the depths of thy necessity to reveal to thee the precious truth of His securing thee, by His blood-shedding, from hell, Satan, law, sin, and self, and blessing thee with grace here, and glory hereafter. By an act of pure grace He took my sins and made an end of them, and gave me His righteousness. He endured my death and gave me His life. He took my sorrows and gives me His consolations. He suffered my hell to give me His heaven. Blessed be God, He is well pleased with the redemption work of the Surety of the covenant of grace, and in Him He beholds the perfection of all His elect and redeemed ones. This redemption was planned in grace, flows from grace, was accomplished

in grace, and is revealed by grace. It was an act of grace for the Father to give us to Christ before all worlds. It was also a gracious act on the part of Christ to receive us from His Father's hands. It will be all of grace that we shall be glorified with Him throughout a long eternity.

3. *Forgiveness.* "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7). I like that. It is not only election before the world began, and redemption wrought out by Christ, but it is the sweet experience of both by the gracious power of the Holy Ghost.

"Forgiveness! 'tis a joyful sound
To malefactors doomed to die;
Lord, may this bliss in me be found,
May I redeeming grace enjoy."

Yes, to all those who are feelingly appointed to destruction, forgiveness is most sweet and precious. When the sentence of death is experienced, and guilt lies heavy upon the wounded conscience, when a Father's smile is desired but His frown is feared, when conviction fastens on the soul but confession falters on the lip, the sweets of divine forgiveness are doubly welcome. Sometimes, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, we are brought to such a point of spiritual oppression that we would confess our sins, but we feelingly fail. Yet our own God recognises and acknowledges the pent up sigh, the unutterable groan, the inexpressible desire, and fails not to bless us with answers of peace. Though our sins be as black as hell, and innumerable as the stars, yet, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just"—faithful to His covenant promises, and just to the covenant Sufferer—"to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 8, 9). Some would have us believe this is peculiar to the first experience of acceptance with God, and that afterward we are to proceed alway with head erect, and joy of heart. They are perfectly welcome to so glaring a fallacy. The apostle says, "*If we confess.*" "*We,*" who walk in the light as He is in the light. "*We,*" who have seen, felt, and handled of the Word of Life. "*We,*" who have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. "*We,*" who have been privileged to lean upon the arm of the Beloved, sit at the King's table, and nestle in a loving Saviour's bosom. "*We*" are sinners and confessors still, and possessed of His love we can join in those words with humble confidence,—

"Oh! I am my Belovéd's,
And my Belovéd is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His house of wine:
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land."

I find it truly astounding, after the manifestation of so much

mercy, to find myself a greater sinner than ever, and in the face of this He reveals Himself to me as the God of all grace, forgiving transgression, pardoning sin, and subduing iniquity, and giving me to say unto Him, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa. xxxii. 5). To all such He will give more grace.

4. *Justification*. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24). What is this? It is not simply forgiveness or acquittal, for these will never satisfy the desires of the true-born and intelligent children of God. Justification, as an act of God, is the perfect riddance of all sin from the persons of His elect. Just think of that! The perfect clearance of my conscience from all law charges, hell's accusations, and the world's reproaches. Justified! This is the eternal and irrevocable sentence of JEHOVAH upon the whole election of grace. In this revelation of my Father's grace I see the transfer of all my sins, my doom, my death, to the Person of my suffering Saviour and Surety, who, in Gethsemane groaned beneath their load for me, and on Calvary bowed to the stroke of justice, and in bowing bore them all away. Now, in the heights of glory He ever lives as JEHOVAH, my Righteousness, and has sent His Spirit to reveal to me and to all my Father's children, on the ground of His perfect obedience, Himself our Righteousness. Look at that glorious declaration of Paul in 2 Cor. v. 21, "For He hath made Him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Here we stand, not as pardoned criminals, or justified sinners, but as accepted sons. Ay, we stand with Him in the bonds of eternal wedlock—one with Him in all He is, and in all that He has, and are "to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted," or, "*graced* us in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6). My heart is ready to sing with dear old John Kent,—

"'Twas with an everlasting love,
That God His own elect embrac'd,
Before He made the worlds above,
Or earth on her huge columns placed.

Then, in the glass of His decrees,
Christ and His bride appeared as One;
Her sin, by imputation, His,
Whilst she in spotless splendour shone.

O Love, how high Thy glories swell,
How great, immutable, and free,
Ten thousand sins, as black as hell,
Are swallowed up, O Love, in Thee."

Do not our hearts bound with one accord in these glorious facts?
Indeed they do. And we delight to know that "in union with

the Lamb" our God has grace for us and grace in us. Here we consider,—

5. *Faith*. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8). Fleshly religionists are sure to ask, "*Is there nothing for us to do?*" I answer, Nothing. Salvation is God's work from first to last. "*But must we not believe?*" I answer again, Believing is not an exercise of the natural will, but the work of God the Holy Ghost in elect souls. It is God's act *in me*, not my act for God. As a spiritual grace it is God's gift. See Phil. i. 29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." That faith is a spiritual grace and not a fleshly work, we see from Rom. iv. 4, 5: "Now to Him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Something to do after all, cries the fervid follower of Arminius. Wait a moment, and let us look at the word "*believeth*" in the light of its surroundings. Paul says, "To him that *worketh not but believeth*." There we see *believing* is put in contrast to *working*. They are two opposites. The believing of the child of God, or "the faith of God's elect," is wholly God's work in them. See John vi. 28, 29: "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God. Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." Do you believe to the saving of your soul? Christ says, "This is the work of God." Do you wish to contradict Him? Turn to Mark xi. 22: "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God." Look at the margin. "Have the faith of God." I like that. So did Paul. He was justified, but it was by the *faith of Jesus Christ* (Gal. ii. 16). He lived spiritually and eternally, but it was by the *faith of the Son of God* (Gal. ii. 20). He was found righteous in that righteousness which is through the *faith of Christ* (Phil. iii. 9).

"Faith! 'tis a precious grace,
Where'er it is bestowed;
It boasts of a celestial birth,
And is the gift of God."

6. *Repentance*. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 31). True repentance is often seen in the tear flowing from the eye which looks upon a suffering and bleeding Christ. As grace leads me to the lowly shades of Gethsemane to hold fellowship with my suffering Lord, my heart is broken with the sense of the sins which brought Him there, while my spirit forsakes them as I find forgiving grace in Him. It is here I learn that prayer is a spiritual grace flowing from oneness with Him. See Zech. xii. 10: "And I

will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." O, my dear friends, all that I have, do, think, or feel homeward, heavenward, God-ward, is of JEHOVAH'S matchless, free, and uninfluenced grace. From the first sigh of spiritual sorrow to the triumphant song in glory every blessing is mine through sheer grace.

"*The grace of God that bringeth salvation.*" By the Gospel of the grace of God He brings salvation to the hearts of His elect. I love a bringing God. I glory in a bringing Saviour. I delight in the Spirit who brings glad tidings of good things to my heart. He brings it in promises, not proffers. Uncertainties will not meet the spiritual need of God's quickened ones. To Zaccheus a bringing Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke xix. 9). To the poor man who fell among thieves a punctilious priest and a prating Levite were of no avail; but the good Samaritan "*came where he was*" with His wine to search, oil to soothe, a beast to carry, and provision for life. Does not that suit you? It will do for me.

"*Hath appeared to all men.*" The Arminian perversion of these words, that the grace of God is offered to all mankind, is contrary to common sense, every day observation, spiritual experience and divine revelation. The truth of this part of the text is, that, when salvation is brought home to the heart of a child of God it will be sure to manifest itself, or appear, to all around him. When the grace of God brought salvation to the heart of persecuting Saul of Tarsus it appeared to Ananias when the Lord said unto him, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts ix. 11). Grace appeared in the conduct of the Samaritan harlot when she left her waterpot and went forth proclaiming the praises of the lonely Stranger at the well. To the Gadarenes, sovereign and saving grace appeared in the demoniac as he sat at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. Those who are a new creation in Christ Jesus must of necessity manifest new dispositions and desires, which those around them are sure to mark. Wherever God's grace and salvation are experienced, godliness is sure to appear.

II. GODLINESS.—"Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Grace teaches us to deny anything that is opposed to God, and to live according to His Holy Word. It teaches us to deny that which is evil and erroneous, and to do that which is right and truthful. Shoals of religious evil speakers abound, who lie and say, The doctrines of grace lead to looseness of living and licentiousness. But I would ask them, Who are thus led? Not the unregenerate, for they require no

such leading, sin being their element and their delight. Not the regenerate, for they hate the very sins they commit, and when they hear a charge so false can only exclaim, "God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. vi. 2). Grace brought home to the heart teaches its subject to live *soberly*, not only in regard to eating and drinking, but in the judgment, conduct, temper, and talk—to live *righteously* in our dealings with our fellow men—and *godly* in our separation from the world and service to God. Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12). What is it to live godly? It is to manifest the life of God in the confession and conversation. It is the grace of God manifested in the regeneration, faith, walk, and warfare of elect vessels of mercy. It is seen in the sinner who has been taught to take God into account rather than man.

III. GLORY.—"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Grace in the heart is glory begun. Those who are the subjects of sovereign, reigning grace, are not taught by it to look forward for death and judgment, but to know that death was destroyed when their Surety died on Calvary, and that judgment was ended when He suffered for sin. Christ in my heart is the Hope of Glory (Col. i. 27), and in the enjoyment of this I am led to look out for the glorious appearing of my Saviour-God, who, when He comes, will be no stranger-God to my waiting and adoring spirit. The thought of this causes me oftentimes to seek for communion with the glorified, and anxiously wait for the time when I shall enjoy my native air and home. The first appearing of my Lord was in purest grace. His second appearing will be in purest glory. All this is in full accordance with His precious demand in John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me." Then we shall see Him, *who appeared* in lowly grace to redeem us with His blood—who *now appears* in the presence of His Father to make intercession for us, and to save us to the uttermost of all our falls, fears, and follies—and who *will appear* to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Then we shall see Him in the unclouded glory of His Person, grace, salvation, righteousness and power, and divested of the burden of the flesh, shall praise and adore Him with unsinning hearts for ever and for ever.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

A SEEKING GOD AND A WORSHIPPING
PEOPLE.

A Sermon

PREACHED IN TRINITY CHAPEL, TRINITY STREET, BOROUGH, LONDON,
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 23RD, 1877, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."—John iv. 23.

THE mind of the truly-sent servant of God, whom He has commissioned to make known His mind and will, to proclaim His truth for the Father's glory, the Son's exaltation, and the Spirit's honour, is oftentimes exercised and perplexed in endeavouring to find suitable texts for special occasions. Why is this? I believe such exercises spring from our wretched flesh, for the privilege of the faithful minister of Jesus is not so much an appropriate text, or the laying out of his subject, as it is to exalt his Master, spread abroad His fame, and speak well of His Name, for the comfort of His tried and tempted mourners as they journey through this world of sin and sorrow to the glory He has laid up for them above. On my way to this place, my mind was exercised with the state of the weather, thinking the rain would thin our number, until it rested in sweet composure in the will of the God of the weather, and in the blessed assurance that all our times and seasons, temporal and spiritual, are in His own power (Acts i. 7). As the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all His elect in Him, He knows best the kind of weather that is good for us, and has determined beforehand the number of persons who should come and hang upon the words of a poor sinner, hoping to catch a little spiritual instruction, consolation, and encouragement. My mind has been graciously led—mark—graciously led! I do love to be led by the blessed Spirit, and I hate to feel my mind running before Him. I love to be active in searching God's written

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Word. I love to be passive in receiving the Spirit's lessons therefrom. It is a precious privilege for me to rest in that delightful spot described by Toplady,—

"Sweet in the confidence of faith,
To trust His firm decrees :
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

My mind has been led into the contemplation of this very precious narrative, and may the gracious Guide into all spiritual truth be with us and grant unto us "good words and comfortable words," so that we may have the assurance at the close of the service that our own God has walked with us and we have walked with Him to-day.

I love the narrative portions of the blessed Book almost more than others which are declarations of God's truth; but every portion without the power of the Spirit and the presence of the Master is profitless, sapless, dry. May we be graciously taught what that means in Psalm civ. 28: "That Thou givest them they gather; Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good." But you may ask why I prefer the narrative portions of the written Word to others. I will tell you. It is because I can see in them truth in living reality. They reveal to me God's love, grace, and power in the lives of favoured sinners. In them I see a precious Jesus making a way to the hearts of His people, subduing their rebellious wills by the power of His loving sympathy, and bringing every thought into captivity to His law of love. In each of these precious narratives we read something of our own character. Do we read of the blind restored to sight? It is sufficient to make our hearts sing,—

"Amazing grace (how sweet the sound !)
That saved a wretch like me ;
I once was lost, but now am found ;
Was blind, but now I see."

Do we read of the deaf blessed with hearing? We remember well the time when we had no ear for the sweet sound of Emmanuel's voice; but now we rejoice in the possession of a spiritual ear for His words of grace and salvation, and a heart to delight in the spirit of these precious words,—

"There is a name I love to hear,
I love to speak its worth ;
It sounds like music to my ear,
The sweetest name on earth."

Do we read of the dead raised to life? It causes our hearts to quiver with the power and preciousness of this gracious fact, "but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 4, 5).

It is not my intention this afternoon to confine my remarks to the text, but try to gather up a few crumbs as they are scattered before us in the narrative. In reading the Gospel by John you will notice this feature—our Lord Jesus Christ is in contact and communion with individuals, not with crowds. In every other Gospel we see multitudes attending Him, in this He has to do with the single seeker, or sought one. In Matt. v. 1, we have an account of multitudes gathered to hear His sermon on the mount. In Luke iv. we see Him in the synagogue of Nazareth, preaching a searching and discriminating sermon. He preached truths then which are equally hated by the religious professors of the present day. The religious Nazarenes were filled with wrath, and led Him to the brow of the hill whereon the city was built, intending to kill Him. The greatest of all teachers received scant courtesy from the religious element. How different is the reception given Him by those who merely profess to be the children of God, to that given Him by those who are really so. But in this Gospel by John we see Jesus with one sinner at a time. Every living child loves to be alone with Him; but the hypocrite delights to be seen with Him before the crowd that he may appear to be something there. The true disciple seeks to be alone with Him and court the searching look of those eyes that pierce him through and through, ay, down to the very recesses of his inmost being. While false faith shuns the light, true faith cries out with importunity, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24). Notice that expression, "*any wicked way.*" That may be puzzling to some of you who have been brought to acknowledge, with Paul, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." No other way but that of evil can be found in the natural heart of the living child of God. It is a nest of unclean vipers, a fountain of corruption, the seat of every sin. *Any wicked way?* If you will consult the margin, you will see it reads thus: "*any way of pain or grief.*" Disciples indeed love these to be taken out of the way. "Search me," is the cry of the true-born child of God. "Spare me," is the cry of the hypocrite.

In the first chapter of John's Gospel, we do not find our blessed Lord in the midst of crowds. At the 43rd verse we read that Jesus would go forth as the Seeker of His lost ones. His search was not in vain. He findeth Philip, and subsequently "Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Jewish prejudice was roused in a moment. Denominational differences and dispensational barriers arose to view immediately. Nathaniel said to

Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip gave him the very best answer possible—"Come and see." It is useless parleying with people who are determined to hoist their denominational differences and sectarian badges in the face of those who honestly differ from them. It is blessed to know that our God, in the display of His glorious sovereignty, will bring His instruments in the accomplishment of His gracious will from the most unlikely spots, and send them where He will for the ingathering of His jewels of covenant love. "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me?" Whence indeed! Human nature will ever question the realities of Divine revelation. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." These searching declarations brought an adoring exclamation from Nathaniel's heart. The Lord had made known His knowledge of Nathaniel's emotions and thoughts under the fig-tree. He knew all about the heart-longing and spirit-yearning of the new nature; and it was as though He had said to Nathaniel, "I saw thee in thy soul-trouble, and I heard the desires of thy broken and contrite spirit, and will bless thee with My salvation, succour, and sympathy." "Thus *were* the secrets of his heart made manifest," and in a spirit of adoration and wonder, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." He knew and felt that none but the Son of God could thus see him and search him out. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? *Thou shalt see greater things than these.*" These last words are the gracious promise of a covenant God to every gracious soul. John the Baptist testified, "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). "Has He given us to experience the riches of His grace? He will give us more grace" (James iv. 6). "Has He blessed us with the possession of spiritual life? He will give it more abundantly" (John x. 10). Have we the seed? We shall reap the harvest and enjoy the fruit. Have we the bud? We shall enjoy the flower. Have we grace? Glory must be ours.

Look at chapter ii.; many person are seen here. The first part reveals the precious truth that our blessed Saviour was a sociable Man. In Romans 1—31 we find that to be unsociable is to possess the brand of reprobation. Our Lord Jesus Christ was not lacking in sociability. He ate and drank with publicans and sinners (Matt. ix. 10, 11), He also sat at meat in the Pharisee's house (Luke vii. 36), and here we find Him mingling with wedding guests. He was no austere separatist, or disagreeable faultfinder; but He humbled Himself to work the temporal and eternal happiness of His associates. The inspired account of

the marriage feast at Cana, of Galilee, proves to me that the Lord Jesus sanctions and provides something stronger than water for the use of *His* disciples. He provided the wedding guests with good generous wine, and those may despise His good gifts who will, but I cannot. At the commencement of this chapter we see Him providing wine for the wedding folk ; and at the close He is revealed with a whip for the backs of those who turned His Father's house into a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. But in chapter iii. we see Him alone with Nicodemus, imparting spiritual and heavenly instruction. In chapter i. 17, we read that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Grace to draw ; truth to drive. Grace to allure poor stray ones into His confidence. Truth to shake conceited Pharisees out of theirs. With truth He startled the learned ruler of the Jews. With grace He drew the Samaritan harlot to Himself. It is night, no doubt our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ sought rest and restoration after a hard day's work. Rest to the labouring man is sweet, and Jesus was indeed, and in truth, a Labouring Man. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34). To His earthly parents He also said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49). Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Look at him. A ruler of the Jews. A master of Israel. A doctor. A teacher. A man of the Pharisees. A decidedly religious man. He had religion enough about him to distress and distract the mind of a spiritually-taught child of God, who has been taught that he needs saving from his religion as much as he does from his want of it, from his good works as well as his bad works, from his *piety* as well as from his profanity.

No doubt, Nicodemus went to Jesus in a representative capacity, as his first words imply, "Rabbi, *we know* that Thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do the miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." In chapter xii. 42, we read, "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on Him ; but, because of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Mark well the manner in which Jesus met the religious and polite ruler of the Jews. It was with a statement of positive truth, searching truth, stripping truth. "Except a man be born again, or *from above*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This was as much as to say, A new nature necessary for the enjoyment, worship, and service of the Father, is not to be derived from yonder temple, nor from all the ceremonies and ordinances of its gorgeous services. The Spirit of Truth, with all His attendant blessings and privileges, comes down from above, from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. "Nicodemus

saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Poor Nicodemus, with all his rabbinical lore, was as blind as a bat to the spiritualities of the Redeemer's kingdom. When Christ uses an earthly metaphor to set forth a spiritual and heavenly reality, the learned ruler could do nothing but doubt and question. Poor, proud humanity will question, but cannot receive the spiritual mysteries of the kingdom of God. The allwise Master met the "How" of Nicodemus with an enforced declaration of the same truth, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What is this water? Moses throws light upon this subject in Deuteronomy xxxii. 2, "My doctrine shall drop as the *rain*, My speech shall distil as the *dew*, as the *small rain* upon the tender herb, and as the *showers* upon the grass." The Lord, by Isaiah leads us to meditate upon its spiritual meaning, "For I will pour *water* upon him that is thirsty, and *floods* upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring" (chap. xlv. 3). Our Lord enlightens us upon this in John iv. 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee *living water*." You see the cleansing power of this water set forth in John xv. 3, "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Again, in John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." But in no place is it so fully revealed as in Ephesians v. 25—27, "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it: That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the *washing of water by the Word*, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Now except a man be born of this water, and of the Spirit of God, he cannot enter feelingly, intelligently, and experimentally, into the kingdom of God. Now notice the difference in the manner of our Lord's dealings with the pietist and the profligate. He breaks the *pietist* to pieces under the power of *truth*. He melts the *profligate* into oneness with Himself by the force of His *grace*. He said to the man, "Ye must be born again." He said to the woman, "Give Me to drink." He met the man on the ground of truth, and with truth surprised him. He met the woman on the ground of *grace*, and with grace allured her. He deals in righteous severity with the religious ruler. He deals in richest grace with the harlot woman. Ah, my dear friends, grace and truth are mighty levellers. Truth lays the whole human race in the dust of sin and death. Grace raises the whole elect of God into communion and fellowship with Him. Mark! By nature "there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of

God" (Rom. iii. 22, 23). By grace "there is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). All in Adam lost. All in Christ saved. It is a terrible thing for the ungodly and graceless pietist to hear that there is no difference between the religious and accomplished doctor of divinity, and the irreligious and abandoned profligate. I believe in all the solemnity of my soul that it is necessary to sound out to the bench of bishops and to the magnates of non-conformity, "Ye must be born again." But to the thieves and harlots, the waifs and strays of society, a precious Jesus is presented in lowly and patient grace. To the fallen daughter of Samaria, He said, "Give Me to drink."

A loving Saviour and a lost sinner are alone at the well. How came He there? "He left Judæa, and departed into Galilee; and He must needs go through Samaria." There was a geographical necessity for His passing through Samaria, and poor blind nature can see no other. But there was a pre-ordained, a spiritual necessity, a needs be according to the counsels of the Father. The head must be found where the members are. Where loved ones are scattered there the Saviour of sinners and the Seeker of the lost will find them out.

"Th' appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by grace;
Give a new heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill."

The well of Samaria presented a scene which no artist in creation could portray. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was in all ages equal with the Father and the brightness of His glory, left His bright and blessed home, and humbled Himself to be a poor, weary, wayworn traveller, in order that He might come where His jewel of election love was to be found, save her from her sins, and satisfy the Spirit-wrought necessities of her thirsting soul. A marvel of marvels here presents itself; the Creator of water thirsts for a little of His own creation. But the Lord of life and glory thirsteth still more for the salvation, safety, and security from sin, guilt and condemnation of the poor harlot-woman by His side. In all the lowliness of love He said to her, "Give Me to drink." Did I not tell you that human nature would ever question the reality, genuineness, and possibility of Divine grace? Blessed be God, He will put a few startling questions to His loved ones, and cause them to question Him in return. He loves to interrogate His children, to bring them to a mutual understanding with Himself, and to an intelligent and experimental conformity with His image, mind, and will. I love to linger over the records of those conversations which took place between the Lord and Abraham (Gen. xviii.), Moses (Exod. xxxiii.), Gideon (Judges vi.). In all these cases we have revealed to us man's weakness and God's strength—man's unbelief, and God's grace. If you will read

through the conversation between JEHOVAH and Moses, you will see that to every promise of God there was an "if" of Moses. In this I see that the living children of God who are brought into face-to-face communion with Him, are very jealous over themselves, lest they may say they are that which they really are not, and *vice versâ*. But the Samaritan woman, in ignorance, questions her Teacher. She said, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." This is a truth as true to-day as it was when spoken at Samaria's well. Sectarians are just as bitter against each other as ever they were, though they try to make themselves appear agreeable to each other by a little fleshly free-will accommodation. But I can tell you who have dealings with other. The children of the living God. Yes, often in spite of themselves He breaks down all differences and carnal distinctions by the power of His love, and brings them to know and feel their oneness with Him. The rich and the poor, the noble and ignoble, the *pious* and profane, the learned and the ignorant, are all brought to one common level, to enjoy the same love and glory in the same salvation.

"Tis a pleasant thing to see
Brethren in the Lord agree,
Children of a God of love
Live as they shall live above;
Acting each a Christian part,
One in lip, and one in heart."

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." It is truly refreshing to notice how our Lord keeps the grace of God before the mind of His scholar. She at once runs to impossibilities—the deep well—the want of means. She freely indulges in comparisons—Jacob and Jesus. All this was of the flesh. Yet a patient Saviour will lead her by the Spirit to Himself. See! "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." At the command of the great JEHOVAH, "Spring up, O well," the springing, bubbling, reviving power of Christ in the heart is known and felt. We sometimes sing at The Grove,—

"Oh! Christ, He is the Fountain,
The deep, sweet well of Love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fulness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land."

When the bubbling of the wellspring of eternal love is experienced within, and the heart is refreshed with the flowings of full and free salvation, then,—

“A joy springs up amid distress,
A fountain in the wilderness.”

“The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” She took the Saviour on His own ground—that of grace. Notice her words, “*Give me*,” not *Sell me*. I have heard persons say in reference to spiritual blessings, “Oh, I would give anything if I could only possess them.” Such little think how much they are actuated by the Simon Magus spirit. Our God descends not to barter His blessings. He gives frankly, freely, fully. This was the sweet lesson of grace communicated by the Saviour to the poor Samaritan harlot, and by it He gently allured her to His confidence and to oneness of spirit with Him. Does He give grace? He will give more grace (James iv. 6). Shortsighted ones have cried and sighed, “Oh, if I only had a promise, a token for good from Him whom my soul loves, a word of love from His sacred lips, I should be satisfied.” It is mine to tell such, If He has given you a promise, you will ask for more. If He has shown you a token for good, you will never let Him alone unless He shows you a continuous succession of them. If you have had a word of love from His sacred lips, your cry will be “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth” (Song of Solomon i. 2). One of old declared, “Faith is a greedy grace. It is ever receiving, and ever will until it be lost in sight.”

“Go, call thy husband, and come hither,” was the startling request of Jesus, to which the woman replied, “I have no husband.” Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.” The Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart was proving to her the fact recorded in Hebrews iv. 13, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” He proved to her that He knew all about her, and, in astonishment, she said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and Ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” The searching power of Christ’s communication was too much for her. She would have gladly evaded His spiritual home thrusts. Such attempts to evade the searching power of Divine truth I have observed again and again. “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered” (John iii. 20). Those whose hearts are not right with God will talk about anything but His searching truth, and will turn away from Him to gossip about

"I AM among you as He that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27).

Are they lamenting His absence? He says,—

"I AM with you alway" (Mat. xxviii. 20).

At the revelation of JEHOVAH-JESUS to the opened heart of the woman, she forgot all about Samaritan worship and the errand that brought her to the well, and went into the city, crying, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" She had found the one object which alone can satisfy the ardent longings of her immortal and awakened spirit. In Him she discovered the great I AM, who alone could satisfy her spiritual desires, and gratify her heaven-born affections. In Him she found the weary Man who alone could sympathise with her in all her infirmities and temptations. Blessed Seeker! Precious Finder! In Him the sought and found ones are for ever saved and safe. To harlots He communicates a nature chaste and holy. To thieves He conveys dispositions honest and heavenly. This is all done without the aid of Jerusalem, Samaria, a temple, or a mountain. The means and the power are in His hands. As He revealed this precious truth to the wondering heart of the awakened harlot she dropped all her questionings, and with a probed conscience, searched heart, and chastened spirit, went back to the scene of her former sin and shame to testify of the patience, purity and perfection of the Christ of God, who had "won her affections, and bound her heart fast." So it is to this day in the case of all those who are sought, saved, and succoured by Him. The language of their hearts, as taught by His Spirit and chastened by His fear, is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. lxxiii. 25). Those of us who are here present to-day, to whom He has been graciously pleased to reveal Himself as our Saviour-God, find this world, with all its pleasure, a weary waste without Him; and we often sigh for that glorious day, when

" — we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
And from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

To Him be ascribed all honour and glory. Amen.

GROVE CHAPEL PULPIT.

“WHITER THAN SNOW.”

A Sermon

PREACHED IN GROVE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL, ON TUESDAY EVENING,
JUNE 1ST, 1880, BY

THOMAS BRADBURY.

“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”—Psalm li. 7.

THIS is the language of precious faith and fervent prayer. We find these two going hand in hand together in the gracious experience of the children of God, as described in the pages of Divine inspiration. Wherever precious faith is bestowed, life is sure to manifest itself, and wherever life is communicated, faith will delight itself in the Lord. Wherever life and faith are found, prayer is sure to abound. These covenant blessings cannot be separated. Those things which JEHOVAH in the riches of His grace and the fulness of His mercy has joined together, can never be put asunder. Spiritual things which He has made one and caused sweetly to harmonise in the experience of His children cannot be separated from each other. God has been pleased to record this in His written Word, and it is His good pleasure to reveal the same in the waiting hearts of His eternally loved ones, who are the fruit of a dear Redeemer's sorrows, sufferings, and soul travail. These are brought to experience the truth of that which is so prominently set before us in the writings of Paul, and so little known in these days of flaming profession—namely, the sufferings of Christ the Head abounding in the members. This is the fruit and effect of the sufferings of Christ upon the cross, which some foolishly attempt to pourtray in painting, sculpture, and coloured windows. I do not allude here to the feelings wrought upon by the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, being vividly described by sensational preaching; but to the sufferings of the Head experimentally and sympathetically realised in the heart of the living child of God by the grace and indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. This is strikingly expressed by the Apostle in 2 Corinthians i. 5: “For as the

sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Am I a partaker of "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory?" I must be a partaker of the sufferings too. If I am to reign with Him up yonder, I must suffer with Him down here. Am I sure of the bliss and blessedness He has in store for all the members of His one body? I must experience rejection, dejection, persecution, tribulation, and temptation with Him while waiting as a pilgrim for His appearing. If He, the glorified One up yonder, is the Head of that body of which I am a poor, insignificant member, insignificant as far as this world's kin is concerned, He will see to it that I am one with Him in spots and places He has described to me in His spiritual geography. Lessons in spiritual geography are not to be learned in schools, academies, or colleges; but in the pathway of suffering oneness with Christ, in the pathway of tribulation by those towards whom JEHOVAH has designs of eternal, immutable, and inexhaustible love. None can know this but those who know and feel the preciousness of the apostle's declaration, "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation" (2 Cor. i. 6). I say again, where faith is given prayer is sure to appear, and the living child of God will be frequently in communication with the high court of heaven. When I speak thus I have no desire to enforce prayer, as a duty, upon you; for I know full well that none can truly pray, but by the Holy Ghost. I allude not to the fleshly breathings of self-sufficient pietists, to form, posture, or outward appearances; but to that which is inward and spiritual, God-begotten, and Spirit-breathed. Down in humiliation of soul the living child of God will be found day by day begging for fresh manifestations, openings-up, and expansions of God's truth, and for revelations of a covenant God and Father, hating sin, yet receiving and accepting poor, sensible sinners as His eternally loved ones in Christ Jesus. What a mercy! God receiving to Himself those who know and see themselves in the light of that experience, described in Ezekiel xxxvi. 31. To this I am brought sometimes, and cannot proceed a single step further, neither can I rise a hair's-breadth higher. After the multiplication of the fruit of the Tree of Life and the increase of the field, which the Lord has blessed, where I have gleaned handfuls of purpose I have been left to the bitterness of this experience, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." Ah, my dear friends, I live long seasons in those regions, though I do not like it, neither do I love to linger over it in the testimony. I know the testimony of God's Gospel goes forth from higher and more glorious ground than

this. The declaration of God's Gospel consists not in a description of experimental mud and mire through which many of God's children are bound to pass. Oh, no, God's Gospel proclaims deliverance from all corruption, depravity, and deceit. It is "good news," "glad tidings." Listen to its heavenly strains, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will" (Luke ii. 14). The peace and quietness of God can only be for the men of His good pleasure; who are brought to the knowledge and enjoyment of their Father's will through the person of His Son and by the power of His Spirit. Though there is Gospel testimony throughout the pages of God's written Word, yet precious little is heard of it in our day. Look at the glorious testimony of Paul in the beginning and ending of Romans viii. In Christ no condemnation. From Christ no separation. Mark well the apostle's unwavering and unshaken testimony concerning the delivering power of the Gospel: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. viii. 2). Here I would ask, Where do you find a testimony like this in these days? He is a favoured preacher who can stand up with the spirit that was in Paul, without presumption, but with precious faith and profound humility, with a heart bursting forth with spiritual emotion, knowing his own undeservedness, hell-deservedness, and proclaim the delivering grace of His covenant God. Glorious privilege! A divine testimony is God-breathed, Spirit-inspired, communicated from above. Blessed be God, it is sometimes my lot to stand before Him and His people in His faith and fear to declare the truth He has so graciously communicated, and know beyond the shadow of a doubt that I am seen by Him in all the perfection of my risen and ascended Lord. But at other times it is mine to wait, watch, wander and waver, to sink in my spirit, like Jonah, to the very belly of hell, and from that dreary spot to send forth my complaints and confessions, and the acknowledgment of His greatness and my nothingness, and to beg of Him according to His riches in glory, by Jesus Christ, to supply my need, wash away my sins, purge away my filthiness, give me to know and feel that, though I am a sinner before Him, yet I am a sinner saved by grace, a sinner born again, a sinner justified from all things, a sinner brought into His house as a son. Am I a son? I am oftentimes wandering, wavering, wayward. I know the meaning of those heart-searching words, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isa. i. 2). Again and again I have spent and wasted my all upon wretched idols which have wooed my heart from Him. Yet He remains the same kind, loving, indulgent Father, with no harsh word for me, no cold look to chase me from His presence. There is no resentful treatment in His house for refractory, rebellious children. O ye parent, how unlike Him we are as we display our thousand

natural infirmities which flesh is heir to. David knew something of this experience. Paul was not ignorant of the pathway of temptation and tribulation. All the saints whose histories are recorded with infallible accuracy in the pages of Divine inspiration, and those who are quickened into spiritual life, and ennobled by spiritual oneness with Jesus, are partakers of His sufferings, and bearers of His cross. I thank God for His putting me, experimentally and intelligently, among His regenerate children, who know their changes and fear Him (Psalm lv. 19). My changes are many. Sometimes I am lifted up, sometimes cast down. Sometimes I shout, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm cxviii. 6). Sometimes I cry, "Why art thou bowed down, O my soul?" (Psalm xlii. 5, margin). Sometimes I walk in the light of His countenance (Psalm lxxxix. 15). Sometimes I walk in darkness and have no light (Isa. l. 10). Sometimes the way is plain before me and I travel on with joy and gladness in my heart. Sometimes the path is rough and perplexing, and I cry out in the bitterness of my soul, "Make Thy way straight before my face" (Psalm v. 8). The world's judgment is that the way is plain and straight enough. Proud professors declare it is very easy to run and tell God what we need; but the tried and tempted pilgrim finds it no easy matter to creep or crawl to the mercy-seat with His divinely wrought necessity. Notwithstanding all this, God's work is hereby evidenced in His child, and the child will claim it as its own, and as taught by the Spirit will be brought again and again from the cold regions of legality to bow before its God and plead with Him according to the revelation He gives of Himself, according to the riches of His grace, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

You see this at the commencement of Psalm li., which I read for our instruction and edification this evening. Here David is seen before his God in feeling a broken-down, broken-hearted sinner. These are the characters I love. Yes, I love those who can tell me something of that spoken of by the Psalmist, "He healeth the broken in heart" (Psalm cxlvii. 3). What know you of a broken heart, and of sweet healing by the application of Christ's balmy blood, by the communication of JEHOVAH'S exceeding great and precious promises? Look at this precious Psalm. David appears before the Lord bound, bruised, and broken-hearted, crushed in spirit, and overwhelmed with a sense of his vileness, corruption, and depravity. He sees himself *an unmingled mass of sin*. This is in perfect agreement with Paul's experience as expressed in Rom. vii. 18: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." David and Paul saw nothing in their flesh but unmitigated evil, and if I am taught in the same school, I cannot produce anything that is good. I cannot bring forth faith, hope, love,

prayer, or any spiritual grace. The Holy Ghost must do all this in me. This is fact according to the saying of the Master, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). Under the parable of the Vine and the branches we have the consolation and mutual love between Christ and His members set forth. Communion and fruit-bearing, not union, is the truth of that parable. We see union blessedly set forth in John xiv. 1: "Let not your heart be troubled." That little company, Christ and the eleven, were all of a piece. There was no Judas present. Several persons; but one heart, one mind. This was in perfect accordance with that new covenant promise in Jer. xxxii. 39: "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever." Let the love of Christ be enjoyed in a company, distinctions and discord will immediately cease. So the two travellers to Emmaus found it, for they afterwards said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv. 32). Now without Christ we can do nothing. I know that I cannot. I may bow my head in this place, and of necessity make use of many words; but there is no true prayer apart from Him. I may stand up and take a text, and tell you my mind concerning it; but without Him there cannot be that true preaching of which Peter writes in 1 Epistle i. 12: "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets who prophesied of Him, and only by His grace and indwelling can we pray, praise, or preach. I love to preach. I delight to be a preacher of God's Gospel; but I do not wish to be a preacher in the world's esteem. I glory in being a preacher of that Gospel which He conveys and communicates to the hearts of His own children by the power of His Spirit, and when I am thus privileged I bow my head before my God and say in all sincerity, "It is no more I that preach, but Christ that dwelleth in me." Of myself I cannot produce a word for His people, nor anything by which I can reach their hard cases, or meet them in their spiritual trials and temptations; but I find it most blessed to be brought by the power of the Spirit ministerially and testimonially into spots of human weakness and Divine strength for the comfort and consolation of Zion's mourners.

David approached the Lord under a due sense of his utter nothingness. He said, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness." I have frequently endeavoured to set before you the fact that *mercy always has respect to misery*. Hence you may find the oft-repeated petition in the liturgy of England's Church, "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners." It is no mean mercy when a child of God finds these words

flowing from his lips and a corresponding experience glowing in his heart. The Lord's *patience* always has respect to His people's waywardness and rebellion. His *grace* bears with their unworthiness. His *pity* meets them in their necessities, while His *compassion* ministers to them in their manifold woes. But here we see poor David, a miserable sinner. Black, filthy, and foul he comes before God, saying, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." What was there in him at that time to form a ground of approach unto his God? Nothing. And we in the same spot of spiritual experience may well sing in spirit, if not in words,—

"What is there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Tis 'Even so, Father'! I ever must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Thy sight!'"

The poor deluded Papist clings to his fasting, penance, and obedience to the rites of his so-called Church. The legalist trusts to his prayers, faith, good works, and diligence to duty; but the child of God on new covenant ground, in spiritual oneness with David, says, "According to Thy lovingkindness, according to the multitude of tender mercies." Think of that, *lovingkindness*. In the world there is kindness and kindness. There are some persons who have a way of their own in showing kindness to their friends, as I can abundantly testify. I have known those who have talked loudly of the kindnesses they have done to me, when I have known full well that it would have been my happiness for them and their kindnesses to have been far away. I love that kindness which is expressed in the beautiful narrative of Mephisbosheth. See 2 Sam. ix. 3: "And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show *the kindness of God* unto him." JEHOVAH'S kindness to His children is not manifested with austerity and severity; but in lovingkindness. This is blessedly described throughout the Song of Solomon, and revealed in Jer. xxxi. 3: "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Then, in this same chapter, after many gracious declarations of His grace, love, and mercy, God shows forth His lovingkindness as a Father to His wayward son. See verse 20: "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD." This is kindness shown in fondest love. It is kindness displayed in the face of provocation after provocation, insult after insult, wrong after wrong. O what poor vile sinners we are. When left to ourselves we can do nothing else but sin. I can sin; but He can save me. I have dug many a pit in my time and fallen into

it; but He has graciously lifted me out of every one of them. I can squander everything that He bestows upon me, while He loads me daily with His covenant favours.

"*According to Thy lovingkindness.*" It is so great it cannot be measured, sealed, or fathomed. It is *eternal* and knows no beginning. It is *everlasting* and will know no end. It is *free*, no price can purchase it, and nothing can hinder its flowing into the heart of elect vessels of mercy in the set time of favour. It is *uninfluenced*, and nothing in the creature can call it forth. It is *immutable*, it never varies. It is *invincible*, sweeping every earthly, fleshly, and devilish obstacle out of its path-way of triumph. It matters not what sin, enmity, incorrigibility, or depravity there may be, love sweeps the whole away, and brings its object in its own kind arms to the bosom of God, and at length to the kingly-palace home prepared by the Father, where He will have all His children eternally about Him.

"*Blot out my transgressions.*" This is only done by the application of precious atoning blood. Go through this Psalm to the text, and you will find David a poor filthy sinner in his own estimation, an object of loathing to himself, and to use a Scriptural expression—though it may not sound pleasant to delicate ears—a stinking sinner in the sight of his God. There he stands experiencing the pangs of felt guilt and condemnation. His load of sin is intolerable, the stench of his corruptions is unbearable. At a felt distance from his God he desires the purity and presence of His best and truest Friend. Life is felt, and will flow to its centre and source. Mark you! Water will find its own level. So the water of spiritual and eternal life will rise and rest on its own level—the throne and heart of JEHOVAH. Notice that precious verse by dear old John Kent,—

"Beneath the sacred throne of God
I saw a river rise;
The streams were peace and pard'ning blood
Descending from the skies."

The water of eternal life and love descends from the heavens to the hearts of poor sinners, conveying them back to the very spot from whence it came. "The love of Christ constraineth us," and we are carried on the wings of faith and hope, homeward, heavenward, Christward, Godward, for we can find no rest for our souls but in God Himself. That is a heart-searching testimony of the Psalmist in the fourth verse: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight." Do you notice the word "*this*" is in italics, which I carefully leave out in my reading? I believe David confessed without it, and that the Spirit indited it not. But we must come to the precious words of the text. Here the Psalmist appears as a wounded, oppressed, filthy, guilty sinner before his God. From

the depths of a sinburdened, sorrowstricken heart he sighs and cries, "*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" We rejoice in the possession of spiritual evidence that we are one with David here, and one with David's Lord. One with the Psalmist in the confession of daily failure, filth and folly. One with the Psalmist's Lord in the enjoyment of our standing in Him, "*whiter than snow.*" David's prayer and acknowledgment give us to see his true state and condition, for independently of faith wrought in his heart by the Holy Ghost he could not have breathed out his suppliant prayer, "*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*" We will notice.

I.—DAVID'S PRAYER: "Wash me."

II.—DAVID'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT: "I shall be whiter than snow."

I.—DAVID'S PRAYER: "Wash me." This proves that David was filthy and depraved. Such is the state of universal man by nature. We read in Genesis i. 26, 27, that God created man in His own image. In Genesis iii. we read that man fell from his high estate of creature perfection. In chapter v. we are told that Adam begat a son in his own likeness. In chapter vi. 5, we have that likeness exhibited: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of His heart was only evil continually." Mark that! "Only evil." That means altogether evil, without a compensating quality. "Continually evil." That means without alteration as to state or time. Evil is man's nature, and all brought to know their oneness with a precious Saviour are painfully conscious of the fact. By nature all mankind are alike (see Rom. iii. 9). "We have before proved, or charged, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one." Some will say that the description given in this chapter refers to profane persons, profligates, reprobates, those who take God's Name in vain. Wait a moment. Read the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD *thy God* in vain." Now, of the profane and reprobate Paul says: "Whose god is their belly" (Phil. iii. 19). But JEHOVAH, in the Decalogue, is speaking to a covenant people in covenant relationship with Himself. He gave covenant commands which they could not obey, thus proving their inability. He gave them also covenant promises which He would fulfil in their hearts, thus proving His gracious power. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD *thy God* in vain." Is that true? Blessed be His Name, it is. In this glorious "*Thou shalt not*" He speaks to me in reference to my prayers, praises, and preaching. Look at this, ye who profess to bow before the throne of grace, but your prayers ascend no higher than your heads. I know what it is to try to pray when I pray not. Earthborn desires are profuse when heavenly longings are wanting. Here I am brought to know and feel myself described in that thirteenth verse: "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Yes, this I confess

before my God, and acknowledge that my prayers are but polluted breath in the presence of infinite purity. Go through the whole of His black list of quotations from the Old Testament, and you will see spiritually "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (ver. 22, 23). No difference between the *pious* Nicodemus and the *profane* harlot of Samaria. It matters not what position we hold in the social scale, when we are brought to see ourselves in God's light we shall bewail our filthiness and vileness. When taken home to glory we shall go there linking arm in arm with dear Rahab, the dying thief, persecuting Paul and bloodthirsty Manasseh. Oh, how humbling is God's lovingkindness when revealed to the heart. Grace is a mighty leveller in the case of those who are partakers of it. Though I am here to-night preaching God's precious truth, yet I cannot go out of this place with one particle of praise for myself. I can only bow my head and heart before Him, and wonder how it is that He will make use of me, a poor polluted worm, to sound forth His praises, and make known His mighty acts among the people.

Look at that marvellous Scripture, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. Mark well the filthy, vile, corrupt, and abominable state of human nature as there described, and then the precious testimony: "And such were some of you, but ye are washed." Some of the Corinthian Christians were not socially depraved, yet they were spiritually vile in the presence of a heartsearching God. This takes all the shine out of the religious professor when brought under the searching power of Divine truth. Read at your leisure Eph. ii. 1—7, and you will there discover human filthiness and Divine favour. Come with me to Titus iii. 3—5: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that!" What could be expected? According to man's religion, wrath, condemnation, ay, hell would be expected; but not according to God's grace. See! "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." That is a painful testimony concerning our corruption and depravity, but a glorious one of JEHOVAH'S love and grace.

Job knew the same thing. Oh, that God would give to each of us so precious a knowledge of His mind and will. Read his ninth chapter all through. Look with me at the fifteenth verse: "Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, I would make supplication to my Judge. If I had called and He had answered me, yet would I not believe that He had hearkened to my voice." Come to the twentieth verse: "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it

shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul; I would despise my life." Here Job declares that he could never boast in creature perfection, even if it could be attained unto. He would rather be a sinner laden with sin and groaning under its burden to be saved by sovereign grace, than an unsinning angel who knows nothing personally of the sweets of redeeming and pardoning love. It makes a poor guilty sinner feel he is the son of a king when he is brought to know that he is a partaker of favour so divine, and covenant mercies so rich and so rare. Come with me to the twenty-ninth verse: "If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Everything that I touch I must defile. Everything that I can produce is but defilement. This is a marvellous mercy to know as revealed by the convincing Spirit of a heart-searching God, and knowing we may well cry to Him alone, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

II.—DAVID'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: "*I shall be whiter than snow.*" David, Job, Jeremiah (ii. 22), turned away from all human washings, from everything proposed or produced by the creature. They were divinely taught that the creature has not a finger in this business, not a conception of the human mind can find a place in this gracious work. It is all of God, from first to last. How? when? where? and why? are all with Him. How? In a sovereign, irresistible manner. When? In the set time of favour, when it pleases God, in the richness of His grace, to send forth His Spirit to convince of sin, guilt, and pollution, and to give the child of God the knowledge and feeling that all he is and has is sin. Some may sing,—

"Sin is mixed with all I do,"

but I am forced to the conclusion and confession that all I do is unmixed sin, unmitigated evil. What can be done to alter this state of things? Can moral endeavours, or fleshly strivings effect a change? Never! Ceremonial washings only lead to fouler stain. Moral mendings will only bring the living child of God to experience more than ever that he is a wretched, depraved, and filthy sinner. If I am cleansed from all sin, the Lord must wash me. If I am purged from all iniquity, it must be by the application of atoning blood to my heart. If this is my lot, I shall know how to come to Him with the feeling of a divinely-wrought necessity, saying,—

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thyself I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!"

Lord, wash my will, my work, my way, ay, everything in con-

nection with me. O, blessed day to the child of grace, when the Fountain of atoning blood is opened for sin and uncleanness. You see all this is in harmony with the experience set forth in the New Testament. See Titus iii. 5: "Saved by the washing of regeneration." Turn to 1 John i. 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." We are thus presented spotless, pure, and perfect, before the presence of His glory. Yes,—

"Whiter than snow." O, what a glorious washing! O, what indescribable whiteness! It is a whiteness in which JEHOVAH'S all-discerning eye can detect no speck, no spot, no blot, no flaw, no pollution, no sin. Our covenant-keeping God having made full provision for all the sins of His elect people to be washed away by the precious blood of Christ, clothes them also in garments of glory and beauty. He arrays them in robes of righteousness and holiness, and gives them to know and feel their justification and sanctification are wholly in Himself. All the sanctified are perfected by the one offering of their sinless Surety, and they are also taught the blessedness of that state described in 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption, and Glory." In Christ the whole election of grace shall stand before the face of the Father, even as He stands, according to that glorious description of Him in Mark ix. 3: "And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." Though I know this in my heart, yet I cry out to Him daily, "I am black." Yet He deigns to repeat and confirm His testimony in me, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee" (Song iv. 7). That is a precious Scripture: "The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psa. xlv. 13). Christ is my Righteousness in Whom I am justified; Christ is my Holiness in Whom I am sanctified. As I stand in Him no spot is seen on me, no blot is found in me. "Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. vi. 22). Look here! "Accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6); "Perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28); "Complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10). I love to sing that glorious description of the Bride, the Church, by old John Kent,—

"Thus in His eyes she ever stood,
From wrinkle and from blemish free;
Loved with the dateless love of God,
And blest by the great sacred Three."

May the Lord grant us His blessing, for His great Name's sake. Amen.

